LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE

PARSHAS DEVARIM

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ESSAYS ON PARSHAS DEVARIM

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B"H

INTRODUCTION

The following collection of essays on *parshas Bereishis* was taken from the weekly Torah messages that I have been sending to hundreds of individuals over the past 22 years.

These messages were written in the spirit of the talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Several of them are actually based on or adaptations of his essays and discourses on the parsha.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe declared that we are living in unique times. He applied the words of the Midrash to our day:

"The time of your Redemption has arrived."

The Rebbe stated further that the straightforward way for us to bring about the actual Redemption is by learning what the Torah says about Moshiach and Redemption. While learning Torah in general has the capacity to change our mindset, learning about Moshiach and Redemption has the capacity to alter of exile-constrained way of thinking and cultivating a liberating manner of thinking.

In this spirit, each one of these messages concludes with an application of the Torah lesson of that week to our

understanding of Moshiach and Redemption, as well as to help us prepare for the coming of Moshiach and the imminent Redemption.

It is my fervent hope that these essays will contribute to the process of changing our *galus*/exile mindset into a Moshiach mindset, which is effected by the study of these themes in Torah.. And may this effort contribute to the imminent Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. Amen.

Parshas Devarim, the beginning of the3 fifth book of the Torah alludes to the entry into a new dimension, for the first four books correspond to the four exiles we've been through. The new book introduces us to the Era of Redemption.

ESSAY ONE

CHATZEIROS:

THE NEW MATH!

Division generates and multiplies negativity; while adding senseless love subtracts and eliminates our exile!

ESSAY ONE

CHATZEIROS: THE NEW MATH!

Preparation

The fifth book of the Torah, Deuteronomy, begins with Moses' rebuke of the Jewish people. Moses has been told by G-d that he would not enter the Promised Land and that he would soon pass away. Moses took this opportunity to prepare the Israelites for their future in a new land as well as for the rest of their existence until the Messianic Age.

At the very beginning of this week's Torah portion, Moses rebukes them subtly by mentioning the names of the places in which they deviated from G-d in during their sojourn in the desert.

Out of Order!

One such place was called *Chatzeiros.* In *Chatzeiros* Moses' cousin Korach started a rebellion against Moses, claiming that he had arrogated unto himself and his brother Aaron the positions of greatness.

The next location identified with a major sin was called *Di Zahav*, which means, an abundance of gold, alluding to

their use of gold for the construction and worship of the golden calf.

Commentators wonder as to why Moses referred first to the sin of Korach and then to the sin of the golden calf, which is not in chronological order. The sin of Korach happened **after** the sin of the golden calf.

A Break Away Movement

One answer to this question will become evident after a brief analysis of the difference between the two sins.

The rebellion of Korach represented the **first** time in Jewish history that a break away movement started that threatened the very unity of the Jewish nation.

To be sure, the sin of the golden calf, which preceded the rebellion of Korach, succeeded in tearing away a large group of sinners from the mainstream that remained loyal to the teachings of G-d. Yet, their transgression — as serious as it was — was **not intended** to create a schism within the Jewish community. Korach's rebellion, however, was the first movement that was designed to create a separate system of leadership.

Connection to Chatzeiros

The Ba'al Shem Tov taught us that nothing happens by coincidence. Particularly, within Torah, there must be a reason why certain things are associated with certain places. The fact that Korach's rebellion is indicated here by the name of the place in which it occurred — *Chatzeiros* — is an indication that the rebellion had something to do with the meaning of the word *Chatzeiros.*

A yard is called a *chatzer* in Hebrew. *Chatzeiros* is "yards" in the plural. In Talmudic parlance a yard is representative of one's turf, one's property. Before Korach's rebellion, there was but one "yard" one community, one people. Korach introduced the notion that it is possible to exist as Jews with *Chatzeiros*, multiple structures, replete with division and discord.

Had Korach not rebelled against Moses and created the schism that had sown the seeds of dissonance within the Jewish community that has survived to this day, the sin of the golden calf could have been forgiven and forgotten by G-d. Because when there is unity among Jews, the recalcitrant elements will eventually recognize that they have strayed and they will surely return to the fold.

With the introduction of the notion that there are many "yards", many political entities that divide us, people can always very easily institutionalize their aberrant behavior

and say, "We can do whatever we want, because we belong to this other party. We are not bound by **your** laws."

Thus, Moses was very careful to admonish the Jews who were going to start the new Jewish future by essentially hinting to them: "Whatever you do, don't create multiple 'yards' and institutions that break away from the path of Torah! This is the path that has been transmitted to me directly from G-d, and I transmitted it to the next generation through my faithful disciple Joshua. If you will create these 'yards,' or multiple turfs, it will bring back and institutionalize the sin of the Golden Calf."

On the Threshold of Tisha B'Av

As we stand on the threshold of *Tisha B'av* the day that our Temple was destroyed because of the sin of strife and needless enmity, the Torah reading of Devarim tells us what we have to do to remove the cause of our loss. We must see to it that there is one Jewish community. No matter what differences of opinion there exists in the Jewish community (some justified and some not), we have to recognize that there is only one G-d, one Torah and one indivisible Jewish nation. All three "entities" are inextricably bound to one another, as the Zohar declares: "There are three things that are knotted to each other: G-d, Torah and Israel."

By strengthening the oneness of our people, we will simultaneously strengthen the oneness and integrity of our Torah and thereby strengthen our bond to the one G-d.

Senseless Love to Counter Senseless Hatred

With senseless hatred we lost the Temple and were driven into exile, where our spiritual fragmentation devolved into physical dispersion. This idea is in consonance with the Kabbalisitc notion that all spiritual phenomena are responsible for and ultimately devolve into physical phenomena.

With senseless, or boundless love, we will merit to see the fulfillment of the prophecies of how the fast of Tisha B'av will be transformed into a festival of rejoicing. At that time — let us hope that it will be this Tisha B'Av — we will see the rebuilding of the Temple and the ingathering and unification of all the Jewish people, both physically and spiritually.

ESSAY TWO
DON'T EXAGGERATE

The more Divine and real an obstacle is, the greater the power we were given to overcome it!

ESSAY TWO

DON'T EXAGGERATE

Up to the Heavens!

In this week's Parsha, Moses recounts the tragic saga of the Jewish people in the desert. Moses recounts how when the spies returned from their mission to scout the Land of Canaan, they described the land in the most foreboding of terms, precipitating a mass rebellion and resistance to going to the Promised Land. Moses describes the outcry of the Jewish people: "Where are we going up? Our brothers have made our heart melt saying: The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified **up to the heavens**..."

The Talmud (*Chullin* 90b), cited by Rashi, comments that their characterization of the cities as "fortified up to the heavens" was an exaggeration.

We must understand why the Torah chooses to exaggerate. Is the Torah not G-d's wisdom and language? Why would the Torah employ hyperbole when it is always insistent on being absolutely precise?

One could easily dismiss these questions by claiming that

the description of the cities reaching the heavens was made not by G-d or Moses but by the evil spies and their followers. But, if this is so, why would the Talmud ascribe any significance to their exaggeration?

Panim Yafot (a Chassidic commentary, authored by Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz, colleague of Rabbi Schneur Zalman, the founder of Chabad Chassidism) explains that by saying that the cities reached the heavens they intended to convey a theological message. When they said "heavens" they actually meant the spiritual realm, not the sky above. It was their contention that the fortified cities derived their strength from "above," from G-d Himself.

Since it was G-d that bestowed strength to these people and their cities, how would it be possible for the Jewish people to conquer them. They felt that once G-d gave someone power, even G-d Himself would be incapable to take it away from them.

Their Error

Their error stemmed from their comparison of G-d giving power to that of a human being. Once a person invests his power in a certain function, he cannot retract it. For example, once a person shoots an arrow, he can no longer retrieve it. Similarly, they reasoned, once G-d invested His power in a given area, He Himself would be incapable of

recalling it.

Thus, by stating that the cities ascended to the heavens they were making a powerful assertion, that the cities and their inhabitants possessed Divine strength that could not be vanquished.

Their mistake was that they compared G–d's efforts to human endeavor. The difference is that once a human being creates, his creation can stand independently. By contrast, everything that G-d created, He must continuously create it anew. Thus, all that exists, exists solely because G-d is continuously imbuing it with life. Were G-d to withdraw His life-force from an object for one instant, it would cease to exist. Therefore, no matter how powerful G-d would make something, by simply desiring that thing to no longer be, it could not exist.

This then is what our Sages had in mind when they asserted that the description of the cities as reaching the heavens was an exaggeration. To suggest that the cities of Canaan were invincible because they possessed a G-d given power, was an exaggeration. Nothing can stand in the way of G-d, even G-d's own bestowal of power onto something.

G-d Given Obstacles

Frequently we are overcome with apprehension that we

cannot meet the challenges that G-d has given us. The lesson we can learn from our Parsha is that the belief that a G-d given road-block is impassable, is simply an exaggeration! No matter how formidable the challenge, even if the A-mighty Himself created the obstacles, they are surmountable.

Of all the G-d created impediments, the existence of exile that began on Tisha B'Av (the national day of mourning, that we will be observing this Thursday, commemorating the destruction of the Holy temple in Jerusalem) is by far the most formidable and daunting one. Yet, to yield too much power to the forces of exile, to ascribe to them G-dly license and therefore invincibility, is also an exaggeration.

The Birth of Moshiach

To highlight this idea, our Sages tell us that during the first Tisha B'Av, as the Temple was being destroyed, the Moshiach was born. This statement perhaps was intended to reinforce the notion that we do have the power to overturn the destruction of the Temple, despite the fact that it was sanctioned by G-d. For the same G-d that "ordered" the destruction of the Temple simultaneously created the Messianic remedy for its restoration.

To be sure, every obstacle — particularly the existence of exile — was initiated by G-d. But, simultaneously, G-d also initiates the means through which we can surmount the

obstacle and reverse all of the negative energy of the past.

May we thus celebrate this Tisha B'Av as the first Holiday of the imminent Redemption, in accordance with Maimonides' ruling that in the Messianic Age, it — along with all fast days — will become a major festival.

ESSAY THREE

SPEAK SOFTLY

When we suffer, we cannot take harsh talk.

In times like these, we need the warm embrace of our heavenly Father.

ESSAY THREE

SPEAK SOFTLY

Connection to Tisha B'Av

Devarim, this week's Parsha, is always read the week before Tisha B'Av, the national day of mourning, commemorating the destruction of the two Holy Temples in Jerusalem.

There is an obvious connection between the two events, the reading of Devarim and the fast day of Tisha B'Av. The central theme of the Parsha is Moses' rebuke and inspirational "last will and testament," to the Jewish people before they entered the Promised Land. Had they not changed their lives in response to Moses' message to them, they could have been prevented from entering the Land of Israel.

Similarly now, our lone obstacle to leaving the state of sadness and destruction — represented by Tisha B'Av — and entering into the state of peace and holiness — epitomized by the Messianic Era — is for us to take to heart Moses' inspirational charge to the Jewish people in this week's Parsha of Devarim.

Subtle or Blunt?

Upon closer examination of the way in which Moses rebuked the Jews we discover that he did not rebuke them outright. Instead, he subtly alluded to their past indiscretions. Later on, at the end of the Book of Deuteronomy, however, as we approach the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur season, the period set aside for introspection and repentance, Moses' reprimand assumes a much harsher tone.

To understand the difference between the subtle and subliminal character of the rebuke in Devarim and the harsher "in your face" tone of the Torah portions of Ki Tavo and beyond, we must first comprehend the difference between Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av. Both are complete 24 hour plus fast days that are designed to get us to think seriously about life and to change our wanting behavior and to improve ourselves no matter how good we already are.

Indeed, the Rebbe explains that Tisha B'Av which is a rabbinically mandated fast day is rooted in the Biblical fast day of Yom Kippur. This is in line with the general principle discussed in the Chassidic classic Tanya, that all rabbinical Mitzvos are rooted and subsumed in their Biblical counterpart.

Yet, similarities notwithstanding, there are salient differences between these two days.

Who could eat? and who wants to eat?"

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, the great and beloved Chassidic Master, commented that there was really no need for the Torah to command us to fast on these two days because: "On Tisha B'Av, who could eat? and on Yom Kippur who wants to eat?"

On Yom Kippur we are like angels; we rise above the physical world. Our souls then lose their appetite for physical nourishment and crave spiritual nourishment instead. For the soul to hear harsh rebuke from G-d intended for the crass body is actually music to its ears, because it too is sickened by the body's obsession with materialism. This is why, as we approach the High Holy Day season, we are more appreciative of the Torah's message, and G-d could then remove His "kid gloves" and tell us in more frank terms about our spiritual shortcomings. For the soul that is more sensitized, as we all are during the High Holidays, words of rebuke do not offend us or arouse feelings of degradation, the rebuke makes the soul feel more energized and uplifted.

Conversely, on Tisha B'Av we are crushed by the memory of all the misery of our collective history. If we do not feel like eating on Tisha B'Av it is usually not because we are

above and beyond the need for physical food, but rather it is because we are too devastated to eat.

This also explains why the Torah's rebuke in this week's Parsha of Devarim is subtle and cushioned, because in this period, when our people's suffering is highlighted, we cannot take harsh talk. Instead, we need the warm embrace of our heavenly Father. We have to feel that His words, though critical of our lapses, are permeated with love.

Rebuke with Love

As we prepare for Tisha B'Av, we must remember that when we talk to our fellow Jew, it should be permeated with respect and love. While, we certainly cannot shirk our obligation to inform others of their shortcomings so that they can be rectified, it must — especially in this season — be with much sensitivity. Not only will it prevent potential damage that can result from a tougher approach, it is also far more likely to succeed.

Preparation for the Future Holiday

We also have a promise that in the Days of Moshiach, all of the fast days, particularly, Tisha B'Av, will be transformed into days of feasting and celebration. It is only logical to assume that the way to prepare for the positive and joyous

dimension of Tisha B'Av is to accentuate the positive and upbeat approach in helping our fellow Jew grow Jewishly.

ESSAY FOUR

COOKING THE BOOKS

Creative accounting is immoral, especially if it concerns our own self-assessment.

We are guilty of "cooking the books" by underestimating our true value just as when we overstate it.

ESSAY FOUR

COOKING THE BOOKS

Defeat of Sichon and Og

This week we begin a new book of the Torah, the Book of *Devarim* or Deuteronomy. Unlike the first four books of the Torah where Moses dictates G-d's words to the Jewish people, in the fifth Book of *Devarim* Moses uses his own language—though most certainly Divinely inspired—to reach the Jewish people.

Most of this book is devoted to Moses "last will and testament", or words of rebuke to the Jewish people, on the threshold of their entry into the Promised Land of Israel.

In the opening verses of this week's Parsha, the Torah describes Moses' words as having taken place "after he smote *Sichon*, the king of the *Emorites* who dwelt in *Cheshbon* and *Og* the king of *Bashan* who dwelt in *Ashtorot."*

Commentators wonder why the Torah had to remind us that Moses and just defeated the two monarchs, *Sichon* and *Og*? What connection is there between Moses' final

message to the Jewish people and the fact that he had just defeated the two monarchs?

What Favors has He Done for us...Lately?

Rashi provides us with the simple explanation: If the people whom Moses was addressing would respond to Moses' words of rebuke by saying, 'What right does he have to reprimand us? What favors did he do for us?' —the Torah thus tells us that Moses had just defeated two mighty foes for them. Hence, Moses "earned" the right to criticize them as well.

On the surface, one can question Rashi's explanation. How could the Jewish people question Moses' loyalty to them? After all, all their needs in the desert were provided for by and through Moses.

One a simple level, the answer is that human nature is such that we forget what others have done for us in the past and we want to know, as the saying goes, "what have you done for me **lately**?"

Conquering our Own Character

On a deeper level, the following explanation has been provided:

The Jewish people's conquest of the Land of Canaan was to parallel the conquest of their own character. Unlike any other country in the world, the Land of Israel was to become a Holy Land, a land that would make certain moral and spiritual demands on its inhabitants. To be worthy of taking over the land from its original inhabitants, the Jewish people had a lot of soul searching to do. Not only was it imperative for them to repair their behavioral flaws, but they had to refine their character as well.

In the teachings of Kabbalah we are told that there are seven character traits that are the driving force of our personalities. It is no coincidence that there were seven Canaanite tribes that the Israelites were told to conquer.

How does one go about refining one's character? How do we eradicate anger, lust, jealousy and other vices? How do we know if we are deficient in compassion and love?

Jewish Accounting

Before we can conquer our seven "Canaanite tribes" we must first defeat the two kings of *Sichon* and *Og*. *Sichon* was king in *Cheshbon*, which means "accounting." Before we can really change, we have to know where we stand. We have to make an accounting of our past life.

Sichon represents the negative force that stands in the way

of our accounting practices, without which we cannot figuratively enter into the Land of Israel.

Honest Accounting

However, even an accounting of one's past will not suffice unless it is an "honest accounting."

In recent days the world has been exposed to accounting practices in big business that fall short of the ideal of being honest. "Cooking the books" is the cliché that is being used for "creative" accounting, where losses are presented as profits, and so on.

This was the role of *Og*, who was the king in *Ashtarot*, which can be translated as "wealth." This means that in making one's accounting, the forces of evil represented by *Og*, try to present one's impoverished character as being wealthy. With such a distorted accounting approach, one cannot enter into Israel; one cannot master his or her personality and life.

Accounting for the Future Redemption

We too are standing on the threshold of entering into the Land of Israel—figuratively as well as literally—with the imminent coming of Moshiach, as was foretold by our prophets and leaders. We too must listen carefully to the

words of Moses that we are to prepare ourselves for this journey and conquest. But in making this preparation we must also not lose sight of the need to make an honest appraisal of our character and behavior so that we can be worthy of the Redemption.

We have one significant advantage over the generation that entered into the Land of Israel in the days of Moses. That generation had to make an honest accounting not just for each individual; there was a need for a collective accounting. The Jewish nation was in its formative years and was far from being an ideal nation. They still needed many centuries of prophets and Sages to refine them.

Our generation, however, is different. The Rebbe emphasized that our generation as a whole has already been refined because of the collective good of the past. Any deficiencies are of the individual's doing not of the collective.

The Rebbe likened our generation's situation to that of a person who the doctor tells the person after his physical, "you are essentially in good health; just a few aches and pains."

Our generation, the Rebbe declared, is in good health, while individuals need to repair their spiritual "warts" and aches.

Our accounting therefore assumes a different character. We

must measure our personal progress relative to the state of the nation. We have to realize that while as a nation we are rich, we might need to make a few spiritual investments to keep up with the collective.

It should be stressed that it is equally wrong for us to underestimate our true value just as it is to overlook our flaws. Honest accounting demands that we acknowledge our generation's uniqueness even as we, as individuals, endeavor to match the greatness of our generation, as we make our accounting in preparation to the final Redemption.

ESSAY FIVE

THE POWER OF MISHNAH

A soul is a terrible thing to waste.

It is equally tragic when we forget we possess it.

ESSAY FIVE

THE POWER OF MISHNAH

The Bridge

This week we begin reading the fifth book of the Torah, the book of Devarim (Deuteronomy), which distinguishes itself from all the other books in that it represented Moses' taking G-d's earlier teachings dictated to him and transposes it into his own words, albeit with Divine inspiration. This explains the other name by which this book is known "Mishneh Torah," which means "The Restatement of the Torah" because it contains Moses' distillation of the preceding four books.

Because of the unique nature of Devarim it is seen as the bridge between the Written Torah (Biblical literature that was mandated to be written) and the Oral Torah (subsequently put into written form in the Mishnah and Gemara-Talmud).

The salient difference between the Written Torah and the Oral Torah is that the former is rigid and precise; where every word must conform to the original text, whereas the

Oral Torah must be transmitted by people, the students of Torah, and must be subjected to their analysis and interpretation following the rules of interpretation handed down at Sinai.

Study of the Oral Torah also involves finding new meaning and insights within the Torah; insights that obviously do not contradict the existing teachings of Torah.

In short, the Written Torah is fixed and the Oral Torah is fluid.

The book of Deuteronomy is the bridge between the two, for while it is one of the Five Books of Moses, an integral part of the written Torah; it was the Torah as it was introduced into Moses' mind. This process facilitated that the otherwise elusive Divine writ should become accessible to every Jew.

Likewise the Oral Torah—specifically those works that contain the actual laws that represent the distillation of all of Torah knowledge into its most basic components such as the Mishnah and Maimonides' Mishneh Torah—is what takes transcendent Divine wisdom and introduces is into our minds and hearts.

"..Redeemed with mishpat... return with tzedakah."

This weekly parsha of Devarim is always read on the Shabbat that precedes Tisha B'Av, the national day of mourning that commemorates the destruction of the two Holy Temples and many other tragedies.

Because it is the Shabbat before Tisha B'Av, the prophetic reading from the Book of Isaiah is also read. This prophetic selection concludes with a verse that provides us with the means to end the exile we are in and the spiraling tragedies that began with the destruction of the Temple:

Isaiah declares: "Zion will be redeemed with mishpat and its captives shall return with tzedakah." Now we know what tzedakah is, but what is the precise meaning of the word Mishpat?

The simple translation of mishpat is justice, but the authoritative Aramaic translator renders it as the "laws of the Torah." In other words, the study of the laws as they have been preserved in the Mishnah and other similar works is the means to redeem ourselves from this exile.

The Midrash echoes this point when it states: "The exiles will not be gathered except through the merit of the [study of the] Mishnah." This refers to the ultimate ingathering of all the Jewish people in the Messianic Age and their return to the Land of Israel. The study of Mishnah—or other works of Jewish law that follow the style of the Mishnah such as Maimonides classic work "Mishneh Torah" is seen

as the catalyst for our return to our Promised Land and the ultimate Redemption.

The Three Weeks and the 528 Mishnahs

There is a beautiful "hint" cited by the Chassidic work *Igra d'kallah* that connects the study of Mishnah with the period we are in. The "Three Weeks"—the period that links the fast of the 17th of Tammuz with Tisha B'av, from the time the Romans breached the walls of Jerusalem until they destroyed the Temple—comprise a total of 22 days, or 528 hours. The significance of the number 528 is that it is the number of chapters in the Mishnah and also the numerical value of the word "*mafteiach*," which means "key."

The inferred message from this is that the key to transforming these three weeks of sadness into three weeks of joy is to study the 528 chapters of the Mishnah, consistent with the idea alluded to in this week's prophetic reading that we will be redeemed with the study of the laws transmitted through the Oral law.

What is it about the Mishnah that makes it the key to Redemption and the ingathering of the exiles?

There are several explanations that can be offered.

Mishnah Anagrams

The word Mishnah is said to comprise the same letters as the word *Neshamah* which means soul. Learning Mishnah is thus the key to revealing our soul's potential, which normally remains dormant until we are jolted by some cataclysmic even in our lives. Being in exile is a description of the state of the soul when it cannot fully express itself. Study of Mishnah allows our souls to be redeemed without the jolt.

Second, the word Mishnah also contains the word Menashe, the root of which menas "forgetfulness. Menashe was Joseph's elder son, who was so named because Joseph had forgotten his travail.

In other words, the Mishnah is the antidote for forgetfulness. Indeed, historically the Mishnah was written—even though it was originally intended to be an **oral** tradition—because of the danger that the Jews might forget these teachings due to the harsh realities of life in the Diaspora. Hence, Mishnah is the remedy for forgetfulness.

Exile Amnesia

When we consider the dominant feature of exile one could say that it is our inability to retain the memory of who we are, where we come from and where we are going. Every day of life is disconnected from the previous and from the next in exile. Being connected is the hallmark of a person who is truly free. Being disconnected from everyone and everything including our own inner beings is the hallmark of exile.

Thus, the study of Mishnah that facilitates remembrance assists us in making the necessary connections and allows us to faithfully go from one rung to the next in our journey out of exile. Memory is the key to redemption.

Distillation

Third, Mishnah represents the clearest expression of G-d's will. It teaches us clearly and succinctly what we are supposed to do as Jews and what we are enjoined against doing. It is G-d's will articulated without any covers and dilutions. It is the distillation of all of Torah knowledge without the embellishments that sometimes eclipse its true essence.

Similarly, the process of Redemption—specifically the ingathering of all the exiles—represents the distillation of all of the Jewish people from all exile influences so that they can be gathered as one people and this "distilled" state

enter into the Era of Redemption. As we traveled through exile we acquired various "embellishments" some good and most negative. Study of the unadulterated Divine knowledge assists us in removing all of the elements that cloud our own identities and potentials.

Let us dedicate ourselves to the study of Torah—specifically the genre of Mishnah—coupled with tzedakah, so that this Tisha B'Av will be transformed into a day of boundless joy. Amen!

ESSAY SIX
YEARS OF ROYALTY

Kings wage war.

Some wars are external others are internal.

A Jewish monarch must know which battles to choose and when he should fight them.

ESSAY SIX

YEARS OF ROYALTY

The Missing Six Months

The Book of Devarim-Deuteronomy is, in its entirety, Moses' final words of inspiration and rebuke to the Jewish nation before his departure and their entry into the Land of Israel.

In this book, Moses recounts the many events that transpired in the forty years that the Jewish people wandered through the desert.

In one of his soliloquies, Moses makes reference to G-d's commandment regarding the children of Eisav.

"You are about to pass by the border of your brothers, the children of Eisav who live in Se'ir, and they will be afraid of you. Be very careful not to provoke them, because I will not give you any of their land..."

Later in the Biblical Book of Shmuel we find that King David did in fact wage war against Edom (the descendants of Eisav). According to the Jerusalem Talmud (Rosh

Hashanah 1:1), this was inappropriate and King David was "penalized" for it. In the book of Melachim (1. 2:11), King David's reign is described as a forty-year one. The Jerusalem Talmud raises the question, what happened to the additional six months he was king mentioned elsewhere (Shmuel II 4:5)?

One answer advanced by the Jerusalem Talmud is that the six months he was engaged in battle with Edom were not counted because they were a violation of the command in this week's parsha not to incite them to war.

In the words of the Jerusalem Talmud: "G-d said to him, 'I told you not to incite them [to war], and you sought to incite them [to war], [I swear] by your life, they [these six months] will not be counted for you."

We must try to understand, why the punishment for King David would be that the six months that he was engaged in an unauthorized war should not be counted as part of his reign as king.

The Jerusalem Talmud provides another explanation for the lacuna in the years he reigned. There were six months that King David was on the run when his son Avsholom pursued him. During those months, he was obviously not in total control of his country. Hence, during those six months, he was not really the absolute monarch. But, the explanation that attributes the loss of six months to his

unauthorized war against Edom is problematic. An act of war by a king is certainly a demonstration of his power. Yet, precisely those months were taken away from him. Why?

Defining the Role of a King

The answer lies in the Torah's definition of a king. A king is not an absolute ruler who has unbridled power. The king is bound by the Torah in more ways than any of his subjects. The Torah places restrictions on his accumulation of wealth, wives and horses, all of which were unrestricted in the lives of other non-Torah monarchs. Moreover, only a king had to have a special Torah Scroll to escort him in all of his endeavors.

The monarch's main function was the physical and spiritual well-being of the Jewish nation. His fighting of wars was mandated only when it served the goal of fostering greater adherence to the Torah.

In truth, the king epitomized the role of each and every individual Jew. Every Jew is regarded as a king or queen because of the G-dly soul he or she possesses. The royal nature of a Jew was given to him or her as a way of conquering the material world and utilizing it to better serve the ultimate Divine King. The individual king was the inspiration and the source of power for all of us to be monarchs in our own lives.

If we reflect on the source of the king's empowerment it is the Torah. It is stated, "By me kings reign" (Mishlei 8:15). This is a reference to the role of Torah as the source of power for the monarch.

Hence, the period during which King David did something that was inconsistent with the Torah's mandate to him was not considered to be a part of his career as a true monarch. Using power to wage war when that war is unauthorized means that, for all intents and purposes, during those months he was not truly a monarch.

The above, however, leaves us with another question coming from the opposite direction.

How could a man as righteous as King David have failed in his role as monarch to such an extent that the months in which he was exercising his royal powers cannot be counted as part of his reign?

The Changing Face of the Monarchy

To resolve this problem, we must first understand the difference between the role of a king and the role of a Torah teacher, both of which are empowered and governed by the dictates of the Torah. In addition to the obvious difference—the king has power to enforce his decisions that are based on Torah while the Torah scholar must use

his power of persuasion—there is another salient difference.

One of the fundamental principles of Torah is that it is immutable. It cannot and will not change. No matter how different we are from those who lived at the time the Torah was given, the laws that applied then still apply today. We keep the same Shabbos, Kashrus, Tefillin, etc. A person who is crowned with what our Sages call "the Crown of Torah" is not empowered to change the laws but rather to faithfully transmit them.

By contrast, the role of a monarch is to deal with the changing needs of the Jewish people and is an institution that is meant to change.

The very institution of the monarchy did not come to fruition until the days of Samuel, who anointed the first king, Saul. And even then Samuel was upset at the people for demanding a king. This has prompted the question, didn't the Torah explicitly command us to appoint a king (Devarim 17:15): "You shall appoint a king over you?"

One of the answers given is that while appointing a king was indeed a Mitzvah, when the Jews asked for it, it was premature. When the people demanded a monarch, the Jewish people did not yet have a need for it. The prophet Samuel—the spiritual leader of the Jewish people—was adequate for them at that time.

Another example of the changes that accompany the institution of the monarchy is the instruction given by G-d not to conquer Edom and Moav. It was not intended to be a permanent law. Indeed, in the days of Moshiach, we will be able to conquer these nations as well.

Moreover, as the Rebbe explains: Moshiach, the final monarch, wears two "hats," (or, more accurately, "two crowns"). He is the ultimate monarch and the ultimate teacher of Torah as well. Yet, his role of monarch will only be needed in the initial period of the Redemption because his power will be indispensable to getting the world to conform to G-d's will.

That necessity will eventually come to an end. In the later stages of the Redemption, Moshiach's role of monarch will not be necessary, but his primary role as the preeminent teacher of Torah will not diminish.

We can now understand how it was possible for King David to violate his role as a monarch. Knowing that the power of the monarchy can and will change, he felt that the time had come because the restriction against the conquest of Edom had expired.

The Journey and the Destination

The above provides us with a valuable lesson concerning our relationship with Moshiach. In the past, we find certain restrictions with regard to the emphasis we must place on Moshiach and Redemption. The Talmud suggests that we are not to obsess about it. Other sources put limits on our search in the Torah for hints as to when the Redemption will occur.

However, Nachmanides (the most authoritative 13th century Jewish Sage and leader) stated that these restrictions no longer apply.

Malbim (a 19th century commentator) compared the change in our direction in this regard to a child going on a trip with his father. The father is upset when the child incessantly asks, "When are we going to arrive?" However, when they finally get close to their destination, the father asks the every same question.

The child is puzzled at the father's changed attitude and cries: "Why did you scold me when I asked the same question?"

The father replies: "When we were still on the road we had to focus on the journey itself. Now that we have arrived so close to our destination, it is not only proper, but it is imperative that we ask: when will we be arriving?"

When dealing with Moshiach and Redemption we must allow for changes in our attitude, readiness and focus. We must change and move forward.

Owning Each and Every Day

The lesson from King David's "loss" of six months because he miscalculated the propriety of waging war against Edom, is that our days count only when we utilize our royal prerogatives wisely and properly.

We are all monarchs. We all possess a spark of the ultimate monarch, Moshiach. That spark must be ignited and fanned into a radiant fire, so that all of our activities are directed towards conquering the world around us. In our context, conquest means living our lives in a manner consistent with the ideals of the Messianic Age, at which time King David's conquest of Edom will be fully vindicated.

To make each day of our lives count, we must take our role as monarchs seriously by focusing on Moshiach and the way to bring about the Redemption.

ESSAY SEVEN

GENTLE AND SUBTLE

A good leader commands.

Sometimes he commands us to do something.

Sometimes he commands us to be independent.

ESSAY SEVEN

GENTLE AND SUBTLE

The Book and Parsha of Rebuke

The first parsha of the fifth book of the Torah, Devarim, contains Moses' final words of rebuke and inspiration to the first generation to enter Eretz Yisrael.

Indeed, the very word "Devarim" implies harsh words, or words of rebuke.

It may be suggested that this is what the prophet Hosea (recited the Shabbos between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) meant when he said, "Take words (devarim) with you and return to G-d." To which words was he referring?

In light of the meaning of devarim as words of rebuke, we may suggest that he was referring to the entire book of Devarim, which contain Moses' words of reprimand. This book is particularly suited to inspire people to Teshuvah.

However, there are two models for rebuking someone, both of which Moses employed in this book. Rashi explains that in the opening verse of this book and parsha Moses starts

with subtle rebukes, hinting at the many instances in which the Jewish people angered G-d, such as the sin of the Golden Calf, the rebellious spies and Korach's rebellion, among others. Moses only alluded to these sins, Rashi explains, to protect the honor of the Jewish people.

"Taking Off His Gloves"

If this is so, commentators ask, why did Moses subsequently "take off his gloves" and reprimand them openly? Indeed, the bulk of this parsha deals with Moses' rebuke concerning the spies' debacle in much detail.

A contemporary Chassidic author, Rabbi Gershon Mordechai Shpalter, in his Imrei Mordechai, provides an interesting answer to this question. He points to the famous Chassidic Master, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev and his unequivocal ban on guest rabbis delivering words of rebuke to his congregation. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak explained that when we rebuke the Jewish community we run the risk of arousing indictments and retribution from the Heavenly Tribunal, G-d forbid.

Rabbi Shpalter asks, how then can we fulfill the Biblical commandment to rebuke one who has transgressed so that he or she will repent? His answer is to follow Moses' example: at first, rebuke your fellow gently and subtly. Most people will get the hint and be moved to change.

Once that occurs, there is no longer any fear for heavenly retribution. Once shielded from heavenly prosecution, Moses felt he could then be more blunt and specific about their indiscretions so that they can do a more comprehensive and profound Teshuvah (repentance or return).

One may add the following to Rabbi Shpalter's thesis:

To rebuke a fellow Jew one must also follow the example of Moses who was the ultimate lover of Israel. This is why he chose to rebuke them first subtly and gently to show them how much he honored and loved them. Knowing how much he loved, cared and was sensitive to them, the Jewish people were now receptive to hear and internalize Moses' subsequent direct reproach.

Moreover, had Moses refrained from reprimanding them, he would have been remiss not only in his responsibility as a leader but also as a lover of his people.

This approach can serve as a rejoinder to the modern day swinging pendulum syndrome affecting the way we deal with the flaws of our youth and all those over whom we have influence.

One extreme approach that was common in the past was to unleash all of one's indignation and fury against those whose behavior fell short of the mark. This approach is both futile and harmful. Its targets react with an even

greater determination to continue in their recalcitrant ways. Society, without the guidance of Torah, then swung back in the opposite direction and a spirit of "tolerance" and permissiveness prevailed. Here too we saw disastrous results. Our youths saw parents and teachers, by the sin of omission, advocate a sense that everything goes. They took that as a license to be each his own final arbiter in determining which direction to go.

The Torah's approach, as highlighted by Moses' two-step approach, was to first make the child, in Chassidic jargon, a "vessel" i.e., one who is able to receive and hold on to the message even when it is ultimately delivered honestly and clearly. How does one create this vessel? It is by following in Moses' footsteps and showering the recipient of his reprimand with love and demonstrating sensitivity to him or her.

Why Only the Spy Incident?

The above analysis, however, opens the door for us to ask another question on Moses' soliloquy in this week's parsha:

The premise is that Moses first hinted at their transgressions and then, only when they were ready, spelled it all out for them in vivid detail. Why then does he only speak of the sin of the spies? When Moses begins his message to them, he alludes to all of their sins, from

complaining about the Manna to the disgraceful relapse of the Golden Calf and everything in between. Yet, when he feels that they are finally ready to hear all the details, he limits his remarks to the sin of the spies. Why did he omit all the other sins, particularly the Golden Calf, which, according to the Talmud, was Israel's most heinous crime?

A simple answer to this question is that Moses was addressing the people who were going to enter the Land of Israel. It was important for them to understand the terrible consequences suffered by those who fail to appreciate the central role Eretz Yisrael plays in Judaism. Having grown up in the desert, they might have looked at the conquest and settlement of Israel as just another adventure. They might have even thought of Israel only as a land where the Jewish people would be safe and secure and that would stimulate a nationalistic pride.

Moses' message to them was that, first and foremost, the Land of Israel is much more than a homeland. G-s did not give us Israel so we can be equal to all the other nations with a land to call their own. Our need for Israel transcends well beyond having a place to provide security for the Jewish nation. It is the Holy Land. It is land that "G-d's eyes watch over constantly from the beginning of the year to the end of the year." It is the place that houses the Bais Hamikdash where G-d's presence is felt, and the

location from which G-dly inspiration goes forth to the entire world.

I Command You to be Independent!

A deeper answer can be offered when we carefully examine Moses' acceptance of the idea of sending spies to scout the Land. When Moses asked G-d whether it was a good idea, G-d gave neither His approval nor His disapproval. He essentially told Moses, "You're on your own." In light of G-d's reluctance to authorize this mission why did Moses give in to the requests of the Jewish people to send these spies?

The Rebbe explains that while G-d did not instruct Moses to send the spies, G-d did instruct him to make the decision on his own. While G-d said, "I am not commanding you to send them," He was saying, in effect, "I am commanding you to make the decision on your own!"

There is a certain point in time when G-d says to each and every one of us, "I have given you sufficient commandments and instruction which teach you to how to live your life. I have given you the knowledge and inspiration to endow you with the wherewithal to make the right choices. I have fully empowered you to make the right

decisions. You are now on your own. Make the right decisions!"

And although G-d knew the pitfalls of giving people independence—they can make wrong choices, as happened with the spies—it is the only way we can truly grow. Moreover, it is the only way we can fulfill our mission to make the world a G-dly world without Him imposing Himself on it. By making the choices on our own, the world, of its own volition, "invites" G-d to enter into it.

Moses therefore singles out this particular episode because he was addressing the new generation in whom G-d placed the greatest trust. They were no longer going to be guided by a Divine cloud and Pillar of Fire. Miracles that were so common in the desert would be sporadic in the Land of Israel. People would make their own choices without benefit of all of the "external" support systems. It was therefore crucial for Moses to give them the background to this new challenge. He does so by telling them that it was on his own initiative that he sent the spies. Moses acceded to the demands of the people. And it illustrated that this spirit of independence that G-d welcomes can, and did, result in disaster.

Moses wanted the people to know the immense responsibility that was being settled onto the shoulders of their generation. On the one hand, they were going to be

trusted with the mission of conquering the Land in both literal and figurative senses. Everything was being placed in their hands. On the other hand, they had to grasp that they also had an increased capacity to make bad choices, which would undermine their entire mission. There was thus no better narrative than the story of the spies to drive home both of these lessons.

History Repeats Itself

In many ways we are the reincarnation of that generation. We have been told by the Rebbe repeatedly that we are the generation that will enter into the Land of Israel with Moshiach, when he ushers in the Final Redemption.

In one of his historic talks, the Rebbe said that he was transferring responsibility for bringing on the Redemption to us and that we must do so through our own efforts.

We share the same paradoxical relationship with our Rebbe as the Jews in the desert had with Moses. On the one hand, we have been given more guidance and inspiration than any other generation. We have a treasure trove of tens of thousands of letters the Rebbe penned addressing every imaginable problem and challenge. We have hundreds of volumes of the Rebbe's profound and inspiring teachings.

Yet, with our inability now to see and hear the Rebbe, particularly after the Rebbe delegated to us the mission to bring Moshiach, we have been entrusted with arguably the greatest challenge in history.

The Rebbe also taught us that the greater the challenge, the more power we are given to meet it. Our generation thus has the distinction of being the most spiritually rich generation and entrusted with the formidable task of bringing about the Final Redemption.

ESSAY EIGHT

NINE STEPS TOWARDS PERFECTION

Waiting for an exciting event need not be a source of anxiety.

Waiting for a future event requires internalizing features of that event now!

Preparing for the ideal Messianic Age requires living that ideal life now!

ESSAY EIGHT

NINE STEPS TOWARDS PERFECTION

Tempered Criticism

The Book of *Devarim*-Deuteronomy begins with Moses' rebuke of the Jewish people that he delivered in the last few weeks of his life. However, as Rashi point out, his criticism of them was tempered. Moses couched it in coded terms. Instead of referring to their actual sins, he mentions the places where they sinned.

The question can be asked, if Moses was so concerned with not offending his people, why then did he rebuke them in unequivocally harsh terms in subsequent chapters of this book?

The answer is simple: by displaying such sensitivity to the Jewish people Moses demonstrated his abiding love for them. The Jewish nation was able to realize that his rebuke was motivated by an intense love for them. Once they grasped that, they could tolerate even the harshest criticism

and lovingly absorb the blows, knowing that they came from someone who truly loved and cared for them.

While Rashi demonstrates that Moses' criticism was tempered, the Or Hachaim (Rabbi Chaim ben Atar; a Sephardic sage of the 18th century, for whom the Ba'al Shem Tov had extremely high regard and whose commentaries are frequently cited in Chassidic thought) explains that these sin-tainted locations actually allude to nine different positive traits for one who follows G-d's Torah and is imbued with reverence for G-d. Seen in this positive light, it reinforces the idea that the Jewish people were prepared to hear harsh criticism after hearing the loving and positive message Moses delivered before he rebuked them.

Considering the fact that Moses' soliloquy occurred shortly before the Jewish people were to cross the Jordan and conquer the Land of Israel, one may suggest that there is a parallel to our own day and age. We stand now poised to enter the Promised Land with Moshiach at our head. Accordingly, these nine desirable traits can also be interpreted as nine aspects of preparation for the Final Redemption.

On the Other Side

The first location, "on the bank [literally: the other side] of the Jordan," which comprises two Hebrew words *ever* and *yarden*, alludes to two positive traits.

The first is *eiver* which is cognate to the word *ivri*-Hebrew. Abraham, (and subsequently the Jewish people), was called a Hebrew because it means that he came from the "other side of the river."

Or Hachaim does not explain the spiritual significance of being called an *ivri.* Most likely he is alluding to the Midrashic interpretation (*B'reishis Rabbah* 42:13) of this title: "Abraham stood on one side of the divide and the entire world was on the other side."

The first step in spiritual development is to have the courage to stand on the right side no matter how many people have opted for the other side.

Applying this to our efforts to bring Moshiach, we have to see ourselves as standing on the other side of the Galus (exile)-Geulah (Redemption) divide. Even if we have thousands of years of Galus behind us and while the entire world wallows in a Galus mindset, we have to see ourselves as part of a new Geulah dynamic, and live that way.

Acting Royally

The second step is *yarden*-Jordan. The root of the word Jordan is self-control. This alludes to the statement in the Talmud (*Berachos* 7a): "One self-controlling gesture in one's heart is preferable to 100 lashes."

Translating this in terms of Moshiach, the Psalmist (Psalm 82:8) uses a word with the same root [*v'yeird*] to describe his power to "control" the world. Our internal regal spark of Moshiach empowers us to control our micro worlds.

The common word for king in Hebrew is *melech*, an acronym for *mo'ach*-brain, *lev*-heart, *kaved*-liver. A king is one whose mind controls his emotions and physical drives.

Living as we do so close in time to Moshiach, the ultimate human monarch, we have the power to awaken the regal spark within ourselves.

Desert-Humility

The third word and prerequisite to spiritual development is *midbar*-desert. This alludes to the Talmudic statement (*Eiruvin* 54), "One should make oneself as [humble as] the desert."

The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni* Isaiah #499) describes how Moshiach's announcement," The time for your Redemption has arrived," is preceded by the words "Humble ones." He chooses this sobriquet to underscore its relevance to Redemption. Genuine humility allows us to get along with one another, which is one of the primary focuses of these days of preparation.

Sweet Humility

The fourth word, *arava,* which can also be rendered "sweet", qualifies the preceding attribute of humility. Maimonides refers to an undignified and sullied form of humility such as that flaunted by one who wears ripped clothing and behaves in a self-degrading manner. This bitter form of humility should be avoided. Humility must be sweet and pleasant.

One may add that the sweetness mentioned here refers to the spirit of unity and sweetness we should feel towards one another. When our egos don't get in the way we have no trouble in relating favorably with others. Achieving unity is one of the primary ways we can prepare for the Final Redemption. If, however, our humility is self-demeaning, it is not true humility and will not lead to unity.

Eyes on the Goal

The following location, "*mol suf*-opposite the Red Sea," can also be rendered "towards the end," suggesting that one should always look to the end. Or Hachaim applies this notion to the end of life and G-d's judgment of us thereafter. However, in light of our proximity to the Final Redemption we can reinterpret this to mean that we should focus on and direct all our activities towards the ultimate goal of the Redemption.

As long as we were trekking on the long and arduous road towards Redemption in the past, our focus was on the needs of each moment. Now, that we have reached our destination and our mission is to internalize the Redemption, we must be singularly preoccupied with that goal in all of our endeavors.

The Exterior and Interior

The next trait is alluded to in the following words: "Between *paran and tofel." Paran*, the Or Hachaim explains, is related to the word *p'eir* which means beauty, radiance and jubilance. Conversely, the word *tofel* implies doubt and agitation. This, he says, reflects the teaching of the *Chovas Halevovos* that a person should always have a cheerful countenance. We must project a sense of outward calmness and joy as if to say, "I am confident that I am in the right

place, going in the right direction." In our heart, however, we cannot be complacent. We must not overestimate our achievements and need always be mindful that we still have a long way to go to reach perfection.

One simple reason for this dichotomous behavior is that our face is "public property!" A Jew must always project a sense that leading a Jewish life is edifying, gratifying, a source of pride and joy so that others are inspired to be happy and pursue a life of observance. But that attitude should not lead one to complacency and smugness.

Applying this teaching to our preparation for the final Redemption, we learn that we must rejoice in the knowledge that collectively we have achieved our goal; we are ready for Moshiach. This sense of confidence and joy notwithstanding must be accompanied by a powerful inner drive that causes us to strive for perfection and never rest on our laurels.

White is Beautiful!

The next step in our spiritual development is represented by the next place-word *lavan*, which means "white" and suggests a clean and pure heart, devoid of hatred and jealousy.

Indeed, one of the radical changes that will mark the Messianic Age, as depicted by Maimonides in the very last paragraph of his Mishneh Torah, is the absence of hatred and jealousy. The fact that Maimonides mentions it at the very end of the laws concerning the Messianic Era (and the very end of his entire encyclopedic work) conveys an important message. Not only will this purity of heart be one of the final changes in the world, it is also one of the objectives of Creation and of the Messianic Age that we will undergo this change.

However, as stated in Tanya and emphasized by the Rebbe, everything that will occur in the Messianic Era is generated by and hinges on our commensurate actions today. We must strive for this purity of heart.

In G-d's Courtyard

The next step is *chaztaeiros* which simply means "courtyards," and is an allusion to the Biblical "Courtyards of the house of G-d (Psalm 116:19)." Or Hachaim applies this phrase to the Houses of Study, but in light of our proximity to the Redemption, it can also be said to refer to the need to focus on the Third Bais Hamikdash-Holy Temple. We must direct our prayers and efforts toward such time as when the Temple will be rebuilt. However, so

long as we are incapable of building the physical Sanctuary, we must study the laws concerning its construction. According to Midrash Tanchuma, G-d regards our study of the construction of the Temple as though we were actually building it, fulfilling the Mitzvah incumbent on every Jew to participate in its construction.

Gold for What?

The final step in this journey is represented by the words *di zahav.* Translated literally they mean "enough gold." Or Hachaim states that it instructs us to put limits on our pursuit of gold and riches. Alternatively, he explains that it teaches us to be satisfied with our material blessings, echoing our Sages as they ask in Ethics of the Fathers (Chapter 3:1): "Who is rich? One who is content with his lot."

Applying this idea to the Messianic Age, and specifically to the building of the Temple (alluded to in the preceding step), it means that our gold should be reserved primarily for the Bais Hamikdash. This is consonant with the Midrash's assertion that while gold was created specifically for the Bais Hamikdash, G-d has allowed us to use it for other purposes as well. There is, however, one proviso, we must never lose sight of its true purpose and be prepared to give our best and richest resources for the construction

of a Sanctuary that will bring about G-d's direct presence dwelling among us, the very purpose for which He created the world.

ESSAY NINE

REVEALING THE LOVE

Subtlety is an art form and should be used sparingly.

Tough love is a necessary tool to help those with a hard crust; but open love is the goal

ESSAY NINE

REVEALING THE LOVE

A Puzzling Midrash

Our Sages had two ways of teaching us how to live our lives. In most cases their teachings are direct and unambiguous. However, there are places in the Talmud and Midrash where they deliberately couched their lesson in cryptic and often elusive language. There is a body of Midrashic lore that has been characterized as "Midrash Peliah-A Puzzling Midrash," in which some startling connections are made between disparate themes and the like.

One of the purposes served by these cryptic Torah teachings is obviously to condition us to look more deeply into the texts of the Torah. Even when we think the meaning of a given verse is straightforward we are inspired to delve more deeply into it to find some of its embedded messages.

One such anomalous Midrashic comment is connected to the opening words of this week's parsha: "These are the words..." The verse there continues to list the places where the Jewish people regressed when they were traveling through the desert. According to Rashi, Moses, in these opening words that he spoke prior to his passing, intended to rebuke the Jewish people in a subtle fashion, by just alluding to their indiscretions.

Pinchas is Eliyahu

The Puzzling Midrash makes the following enigmatic statement:

> "Whoever wants to know that Pinchas is Eliyahu-Elijah will see it from the words, "These are the words [Moses spoke to the Children of Israel]."

What in the world does the identification of Pinchas as Elijah have to do with Moses' words of mild rebuke to the Jewish people?

To answer this question let us compare the two personalities of Pinchas and Elijah and how their identities were intertwined.

Pinchas, the grandson of Aaron, executed one of the Jewish Princes who was caught consorting with a Midianite Princess. His zealousness was harshly condemned by most

of his contemporaries but highly praised by G-d. Pinchas was a member of a special class of zealots who are fortunately or unfortunately too rare. They do unconventional things and respond to unconventional situations that leave the more conventional leaders baffled and incapable of reacting. Pinchas is anything but subtle.

Moreover, our Sages tell us that when Pinchas acted he had Divine assistance. Many miracles occurred that facilitated his brazen act of zealotry. Thus our Sages tell us that Pinchas symbolizes G-d's wonders; occurrences that are out of the realm of nature. The first letter of his name is the initial of the word *peleh,* which means wonder.

Even his reward, given to him by G-d, was unique. Although he was not anointed as a Kohain-Priest, he earned that distinction. That clearly violated the very structure of the priesthood that is based on heredity. One can never acquire this distinction through one's efforts. Pinchas was the lone exception to this rule.

In short, everything about Pinchas is extraordinary. He was rule breaker in so many different ways.

Elijah the prophet is identified as the prophet who will herald the coming of Moshiach. The prophet Malachai—the last of the era of prophets—concludes the body of prophetic literature: "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day

of G-d. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers." In other words, Elijah's function is to prepare the world for the Messianic Age by fostering unity and peace.

Our Talmudic Sages (Mishnah, end of Eidiyos) express Elijah's major contribution as one that will be exclusively to bring peace to the world.

How do we reconcile this vision of Elijah as the man of peace who bridges the gap between generations and peoples with the image of Pinchas the zealot who is known for killing a prince and princess?

Subtle Rebuke

The answer can be derived from the opening words of this week's parsha:

"These are the words Moses spoke to the children of Israel.." As was stated in the beginning of this essay, Rashi explains that Moses was in fact rebuking the Jewish people without saying what they actually did wrong. For example, rather than telling them that they worshipped the golden calf he refers to a location in the desert called *di zahav*, which means an "abundance of gold." This was an allusion to the golden calf that was created by their contributions of gold; a commodity that was not in short supply.

What exactly was Moses trying to accomplish with his indirect approach to rebuking? If Moses was not interested in reprimanding them harshly, why did he change the tone of his criticism in subsequent sections of the Book of Deuteronomy? In later verses, Moses does not mince words. He chastises them in the sharpest terms possible. Why here does he couch his criticism of the Jewish people in rather mild and allusive language?

The answer is that when we are compelled to rebuke a fellow Jew we must examine what is our primary focus. Are we just intolerant of and outraged by immoral behavior—as we should be—and therefore focus all our attention on the evil that was committed? Or, is it because we know how detrimental it is to stray from G-d's ways, that we become concerned with the people's degeneration and we fear for their fate.

To be sure, in both cases we care for G-d and we care for His people. The question is which is the stronger motivator? Which is uppermost in our mind when we employ extreme and extraordinary measures to stop the straying? Is it simply indignation and anger or is it love couched in terms of outrage.

Moses demonstrated that it was the latter approach of love and consideration for the people that was the preeminent influence in rebuking his people. By showing them that he

cares for their feelings—and will therefore not begin his critical words with overt and harsh language—he demonstrated that his criticism was motivated by profound love for them.

Parallel between Moses and Pinchas

Pinchas too was concerned with G-d's honor. But his primary concern was for the welfare of his people. Pinchas' zealousness was motivated primarily by his passionate love for his people. His sole concern in doing what he did was to save the Jewish people. Pinchas, contrary to his critics' contention, was not a cruel, vengeful and sadistic person. It wasn't even just his desire to "defend" G-d's honor. He knew that unless someone took drastic measures, the plague that already claimed the lives of 24,000 Jews—as recounted in the Torah—would continue to claim even more lives. Only Pinchas' heroic response saved the day.

Thus, G-d says, "Pinchas, the son of Elazar the son of Aaron the priest, has turned My anger from the children of Israel by zealously avenging Me in their presence, and I did not destroy the children of Israel because of My zealous anger." G-d credits Pinchas with "assuaging" G-d's anger and thereby saving the children of Israel. It is clear from this verse that the Pinchas' ultimate goal was saving the Jewish people.

And, indeed, the Torah then states that G-d gave Pinchas His "covenant of peace."

Pinchas' radical and violent behavior belied his love and devotion to his people and that his ultimate goal was to bring peace between G-d and His people just as Moses' rebuke of his people was an expression of his love for them.

Thus, the Midrash states that if you want to understand the interplay between a violent Pinchas and a peace loving Elijah study Moses' opening words of rebuke that were couched in non-angry terms because he did it out of love.

Enough Tough Love!

We are now situated in the period known as the Three Weeks and the Nine Days, which are ostensibly expressions of G-d's anger to, and His rebuke of, us. This period—in which the tragic events that led to the destruction of the Holy Temple occurred—were a harsh rebuke to us. But, we know that underlying that rebuke is G-d's love true love for His people that will manifest itself imminently with the coming of Moshiach and the final Redemption.

To demonstrate to us that the rebuke was motivated by love, our Sages tell us that when our adversaries entered the Temple to destroy it they noticed the two images of the

Cherubim—that symbolized the relationship between G-d and the Jewish people—were in each other's embrace!

But we cannot be content with the knowledge that G-d's rebuke is a form of "tough love." We want G-d to shower His unambiguous love on us. And, indeed, we are commanded to pray to G-d and tell Him precisely that. We had enough "tough love." We want G-d's overt, unadulterated and unequivocal love.

We were empowered to help make that love emerge by doing the same in our own relationships with our fellow Jew. It goes without saying that whenever we must be critical of another it should be motivated exclusively by a sense of compassion and concern for their welfare. However, that does not suffice. We must work to make that feeling of love for the other break out of its cover and be expressed openly and unabashedly with love.

ESSAY TEN

STOP CIRCLING THE MOUNTAIN!

Some reach out to G-d scale and conquer mountains.

Some believe in themselves for salvation.

Torah teaches us to search for, discover and reveal our inner G-dly strength to surmount all obstacles.

ESSAY TEN

STOP CIRCLING THE MOUNTAIN!

It Depends to Whom You are Talking

In the opening passages of the Book of Devarim, which we begin reading this week, Moses recounts the events of the past forty years the Jewish nation sojourned in the desert. Moses utilized this opportunity before his passing to rebuke his people for all of their transgressions.

The great Chassidic Master, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, known for his passionate love for and defense of the Jewish people, commented on how the same Moses who asks G-d to erase him from His book if he does not forgive the Jewish people now rebukes them. Both exercises derived from Moses love for his people. When speaking to G-d on their behalf he is willing to give life and limb to have G-d overlook their deficiencies, but when dealing with the people themselves, Moses is unrelenting in his efforts to get them to go on the right path.

Mountain Metaphors

In one of his descriptions of the past Moses states how G-d says to him: "You have circled this mountain long enough! Turn northward."

Every word of Torah has eternal meaning. Moses' final words uttered on the threshold of the Jewish nation's entry into the Promised Land portends our own challenges as we stand poised to enter the Era of the Final redemption, after traversing the long and arduous exile. Their/our journey can be likened to going in circles.

A mountain in Torah literature conveys a double metaphor. On the one hand it is a symbol of the obstructive power of our internal impulses for evil; known as the *Yetzer Hara* (Talmud, Sukkah 52a). Paradoxically, the term mountain is also employed in Biblical and Talmudic literature as a reference to the Bais Hamikdash, the Holy Temple (Talmud, *Berachos* 48b).

And it is concerning both of these metaphors that G-d tells us through Moses to cease circling the mountain and go north!

Go North!

In the context of our evil impulse, we are always going in circles and never succeeding in conquering our evil impulse. It is as if we are circling the enemy and perhaps

even eluding their arrows, but try as we may, we cannot surmount, vanquish or conquer the mountainous obstruction.

As we approach the Messianic Age, the Torah exhorts us to ceases struggling with evil in the conventional way of trying to contain it. Stop circling the enemy. It is now high time for us to go north. North in Hebrew-*tzafon*-also contains the meaning of "hidden." We must now reach into our subconscious spiritual reservoir to elicit deeper and more formidable resources that empowers us successfully scale and conquer the mountain.

Revealing our Inner Sanctuary

But the "mountain" here is also an allusion to the Bais Hamikdash, the Holy temple that was built on a mountain as is frequently referred to as G-d's mountain in Biblical and Talmudic literature. Circling the mountain in this context is a suggestion of our inability to realize our quest for the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash. Every year since the Temple was destroyed, close to two thousand years ago, we "surround the mountain." On the one hand we are obsessed with it. We make mention of it in our prayer countless times. We talk about it, we learn its laws and underlying philosophy, we yearn to see it in its glory. However, we are still going in circles. We have not been

able to conquer that mountain and make the Third temple a physical and palpable reality!.

Here too, the Torah tells us that the way to achieve our goal and finally realize two thousand years of yearning is to "go north."

North, again, means look for the hidden dimension of our own souls where our own personal Temple exists. The challenge is to make the subconscious Sanctuary which is deeply embedded within our soul a conscious part of our personality and our lives.

Perhaps the idea of actualizing and revealing the hidden Temple is hinted in the word "turn." In Hebrew the word turn-*p'nu* is related to the word face and inward. These two words are at once contradictory and complementary. The face is the part of our anatomy that is never concealed. The word "face" in Hebrew as well as in English expresses the external nature of something, as in the phrase "on its face." Yet, paradoxically, the human face expresses our innermost emotions. Our face takes our most intimate secrets and internal nature and puts it on display for everyone to see.

Hence, when G-d tells us "*P'nu*-turn and go northward" it can also be rendered: "Reveal your subconscious and concealed Sanctuary."

By exposing our own internal Temple and allowing it to show up on our face we enable the physical Sanctuary that is presently concealed and eludes us to be revealed from its hidden location. Our efforts today are the catalysts for the unfolding of the events associated with the coming of Moshiach, including the building of the Bais Hamikdash.

Who Will Rebuild The Bais Hamikdash?

With the foregoing analysis we can reconcile the two views concerning the way the Third temple will be built.

According to Maimonides, the Third Temple will be built by Moshiach and the Jewish people. According to Rashi, the Third Temple will, miraculously, descend from above.

One way of reconciling these two views has been cited by the Rebbe that it depends on our own spiritual state before the coming of Moshiach. If we are worthy and refined, the Temple will be a spiritual one that will descend from Above. If, however, we are spiritually wanting, we will have to invest our own human efforts in rebuilding the Temple. The Temple will not, initially, be as magnificent and spiritual as in the first scenario.

In light of the earlier explanation of "turn and go north" additional light can be shed on the two scenarios offered for the construction of the future Sanctuary.

If we do not succeed in revealing our hidden "*tzafon*-north" inner Sanctuary that means that we are content with our superficial and most peripheral spiritual efforts. It means that we have not plumbed the depths of our soul to mine the hidden spiritual treasures we all possess. We are content with the most external and least strenuous efforts to make ourselves and our surroundings Sanctuaries for G-d. Hence, the Third Temple will likewise-at least, initially-be of an external and less spiritual nature. It will be built by finite human beings, albeit with the guidance and inspiration of Moshiach.

Moreover, in the event that we are wanting in our spirituality Moshiach's full potential itself might also have to wait for it to be revealed. Moshiach will initially only reveal the outer layers of his capabilities and personality and therefore build a somewhat limited version of the Temple.

On the other hand, if we are worthy; if we have revealed the deepest soul-powers so that they are now on the surface, we will unleash a parallel phenomenon. The Third Temple-which is presently hidden and beyond our reach-will descend and materialize before our eyes. The hidden will become fully manifest.

This week, as we stand on the threshold of Tisha B'Av-the anniversary of the destruction of the two Temples-it is the

most propitious time for us to reveal and reconstruct our inner Sanctuary so that on this Tisha B'Av we will see the rebuilding of the Third Temple that will descend from Heaven. At that time the forces of evil (represented by the word "mountain") will be completely conquered. And instead of the forces of evil posing insurmountable obstacles to our Jewishness, we will all climb the "mountain"-we will witness the revelation of the Third Bais Hamikdash that will descend from Heaven.

ESSAY ELEVEN

GO NORTH!

Not all evil was created equally.

Some forms of evil must be destroyed.

Some forms actually contain a spark of goodness. They are salvageable.

Moshiach will rid the world of the former and empower us to convert the latter.

ESSAY ELEVEN

GO NORTH!

Going in Circles

In the opening parsha of Deuteronomy, Moses recounts the wandering of the Jews in the desert from the time of their liberation from Egypt until their entry in the land of Israel.

> "We turned ourselves around and journeyed into the desert towards the Reed Sea, as G-d told me, and we circled Mount Se'ir for a long time.
>
> "G-d spoke to me, saying, 'You have circled this mountain long enough! Turn northward!'"

The message G-d imparted to the Jewish nation through Moses as they were poised to enter the Promised Land was to cease circling the mountain and go north.

Much, if not all, of what happened to the Jewish people in their transition from desert life to life in the Promised Land, was a portent of what is to happen in the age of transition from exile into the Messianic Age.

What message can circling the mountain and going north convey to us today as we stand poised to enter into the Age of Redemption?

The World is a three-sided Porch?

The Talmud states that the world was created by G-d to resemble a porch that is enclosed on three sides but open on the fourth side—the north.

What did our Talmudic Sages have in mind when they compared the world to a three- sided porch?

Chassidic thought explains that it was intended to convey the message that G-d deliberately created a world that is open, imperfect and vulnerable. Our world was so designed by its Creator that the hidden evil can enter. Indeed, the north is a metaphor for evil, as it says, "from the north shall evil come forth." The evil impulse that lurks within us is also called the *tzefoni*, which means the clandestine and devious force within us. It is the evil that is cloaked in terms of goodness.

Peace, Peace and No Peace!

This phenomenon exists on both a societal level and on an individual level. In recent times we have seen people talk about their desire for peace with Israel, for example, even

as they indoctrinate their children to hate, and even worse. Many people are duped by the peace loving rhetoric that they hear and are oblivious to the real feelings that exist beneath the surface.

On the individual level we find people who cloak their bad behavior in garments of holiness. They will argue incessantly that their motives and objectives are good. Some have actually convinced themselves that what they do and want is good. That is when evil is labeled "tzifoni" – the north one, or the furtive force.

Our task is to take the open and vulnerable world and enclose it and thereby sealing off any influences that come from the north. This is a daily struggle and will only be fully won in the Messianic Age when we will no longer be vulnerable. The world will then become a perfect world resembling the Hebrew final *mem*—a letter that is completely sealed—and a letter that is associated with the Messianic Age in Jewish literature.

Mountain Evil

A mountain is also used in the Talmud as a metaphor for the evil impulse. However, the mountain metaphor describes the evil that is open, brazen and in your face. It is not hidden at all. This is particularly true of Mount Se'ir, the mountain the Torah discusses in the verse cited at the

beginning of this essay. Mount Se'ir is the province of Esau, who represents the nations of the world that were the arch enemies of the Jewish people; especially the nation responsible for the destruction of the Temple that we commemorate in these three weeks culminating with Tisha B'Av. It is also a metaphor for the most **obvious** and overt forms of evil.

As we make our journey through the "desert of nations"—as our experience in exile has been characterized—we are constantly "circling" the mountain. We cannot conquer the overt forms of evil because there is a subterranean form of evil that it feeds on. The mountain cannot be uprooted without getting to the very root of evil—the *tzifoni*.

Reclining at the Seder

This idea can actually be traced to the Passover Seder at which time we are required to recline. According to the Midrash, the Hebrew word for reclining "*haseiva*" is related to the word used here "*sov*" which means to encircle. We recline Passover night, according to the Midrash, because we went in circles when we were in the desert as we left Egypt.

The question arises, why would we want to commemorate the circling of the Jews in the desert on Passover night? What connection does it have with the idea of Redemption?

The reason we had to traverse the desert circuitously is because we were not ready to conquer evil. The negativity that we absorbed in Egypt did not leave us sufficiently to enable us to enter the Promised Land immediately. As much as we tried to shed the evil and extinguish the flames of the "other side," these embers would always be reignited by the insidious force of evil that lurked beneath the surface. This means that we cannot really leave Egypt behind until we learn how to stop the vicious cycle of having to circle the mountain and still come up short.

When does this happen—at least in terms of the rituals of the *seder*? At the end of the meal we eat the Afikoman-Matzah which was previously hidden. That part of the seder is called "tzafun" which alludes to the fact that we hide the Afikoman matzah. And the reason we hide it is because it represents the goal of ridding ourselves of even the insidious and hidden form of evil known as tzafon.

The Process has Begun

Returning now to Moses' admonition to the Jewish people to cease circling the mountain. As the Jewish nation ends its journey through the desert, G-d tells them: "Cease to circle the mountain! You are now ready to deal with the root of evil—the north side. Therefore, go north!

By their entering into the Promised Land—by accepting the daunting task of tackling the north side-hidden evil—a process had begun that would empower the Jewish people to ultimately conquer Mount Se'ir.

However, the Midrash tells us that G-d told them that it would not happen right away. It would have to wait until Moshiach would come. In the words of the Midrash: "Wait for Moshiach who will arrive and the verse "How abundant is the good that you have hidden... will be fulfilled" The word hidden in this verse is *tzafanta,* related to the word *tzafon.* Ironically, Moshiach's coming is also identified with that which is hidden—the hidden good. Because the only fool-proof way to conquer and eradicate even the most insidious forms of evil is by unleashing a parallel, hidden and unfathomable force of goodness.

The Paradox of Modern Life

This explains the paradox of modern life. If we look around us we are witness to the worst and the best in human behavior—both phenomena are a sign of the times in which we are living. As we prepare for such time that the hidden evil will be vanquished by the hidden good, this drama plays itself out in the last days of exile.

It is our special mission to look for ways to uncover the heretofore untapped positive and G-dly resources within

us. This will ultimately bear fruit with the arrival of Moshiach and the fulfillment of the twin prophecies that refer to the conquest of Mount Se'ir (Mount Esau) as well as the complete eradication of evil.

The difference between the two is that Mount Se'ir, since it represents the surface and superficial forces of evil, can be salvaged and harnessed for the good. Its conquest does not portend destruction of the nations of the world that were our enemies—it represents their transformation. However, when it comes to the essence of evil—the *tzafon* or hidden evil—that will be completely eliminated.

Destroying and Salvaging Evil

Similarly, all the vices that are not inherently evil will be transformed into goodness. Greed for material goods will be converted into a passion to acquire more knowledge and goodness, and so on. By contrast, the inherently evil forces of hatred and destruction will cease to exist because, as the Prophet declares, "The world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the water covers the ocean bed."

ESSAY TWELVE

STRINGS ATTACHED AND THE DISENGAGEMENT PROCESS

While life is mostly about engagement; there are times when we must disengage.

Disengagement is positive when it is from a stifling atmosphere.

ESSAY TWELVE

STRINGS ATTACHED AND THE DISENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Expulsion!

As we prepare for the Shabbat that precedes Tisha B'Av, the national day of mourning the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, we cannot help but to think about the tragic expulsion of thousands of Jews from their homes in Israel.

Whatever one's politics may be with regard to Israel and the various "peace-processes," one cannot fail to empathize with the thousands of Jews who will be forced to leave their homes, synagogues, cemeteries that will all be destroyed, without any indication that it will lead to anything positive. And even if it would have a positive outcome, it would still be a tragedy. Just think if we were told by our government that we will be uprooted from our homes and communities that were built with blood, sweat and tears. Even if it were for a good cause, how would we feel?

How meaningful will we find our recitation of Lamentations on the upcoming day of Tisha B'Av; the day that marks the beginning of our exile, when we were driven out of our land.

Disengagement from Exile

If there is a silver lining in this euphemistic "disengagement" process is that it is a valid and positive symbol for another form of disengagement that we must engage in—disengagement from exile.

Exile, as discussed on many occasions, is not just a geographical concept. It is also a state of mind. We can be in our own home or homeland and feel no special feeling for it as if we were in a strange and foreign place. We can even feel alienated from our true inner selves, our spiritual and G-dly essence.

This sense of spiritual alienation is what the destruction of the Temple accomplished, and this is what we have mourned for, for close to 2,000 years—the loss of our ability to feel at home with our G-d, Torah, people and land. We can even live in Jerusalem and not feel connected there. This is Galus-exile. And it is this thought process that we must disengage from.

G-d's Disengagement

There is yet another dimension of "disengagement" that is now relevant.

Our Sages tell us that G-d performs all of the Mitzvos-commandments that He commanded us to do. So if G-d wants us to disengage, how does G-d fulfill His disengagement?

Perhaps, we can find the answer in a Talmudic passage that employs the term "disengage-l'natko."

No Strings Attached—Literally!

The Talmud discusses the laws of a get, a divorce document, which must be given by the husband to the wife for it to take effect. When a husband gives her the get-document, but is still holding on to it, is an invalid get.

The Talmud discusses an exception to the foregoing rule. In a case where the husband holds a string that is attached to the get and has the capacity to "disengage" the get from the wife by pulling the string, the get is invalid and they are not divorced. There can be no real separation from another as long as one has the ability to retrieve and "disengage" the instrument of divorce from the other.

The analogue to this is that the relationship between G-d and the Jewish people has been Biblically compared to a

marriage. The period of exile that commenced on Tisha B'Av is likened to a divorce. However, G-d always has a "string attached" to the so called divorce process, which he is ready to pull—and disengage it—from our hands, thereby reversing the exile and returning us to our original loving marriage.

If there is room for disengagement talk in this Tisha B'Av period it is about our need to disengage from the mindset of Galus, and to beseech G-d to disengage from the get-divorce process known as exile.

May we all realize the fulfillment of the prophetic promise that these sad days will be transformed into days of celebration and festivity, when the fast day of Tisha B'Av will be known as the "feast" day.

ESSAY THIRTEEN
NUMBERS IN DEUTERONOMY

True Life is two dimensional.

If *chai* (18) is synonymous with life then the number 36 (*lamed vav)* represents life in its fullest, two dimensional sense.

Are you a *lamed vavnik*?

ESSAY THIRTEEN

NUMBERS IN DEUTERONOMY

Moses Last 36 Days

The fifth and final book of the Torah which we commence reading this week is called Devarim (Deuteronomy).

The Book begins with the following sentence:

> "These-*eileh* are the words that Moses spoke to the Children of Israel..."

Commentators point out that the opening word *eileh* has the numerical value of 36 that corresponds to the last 36 days of Moses life in which he taught the entire Book of Devarim, as his last will and testament to the Jewish people before he passed on. According to the Talmud, cited by Rashi, Moses began his monologue on the first of the Hebrew month of Shevat, and continued to speak each and every day until 36 days later, on the seventh of Adar, he passed away.

The Significance of 36

What is the significance of knowing that Moses spoke for 36 days? And what message was he trying to impart when he prefaced his monologue to the Jewish nation with the word eilah-these?

Some commentators point to the fact that the Talmud enumerates 36 extremely harsh criminal offences that the people had to be forewarned not to violate. These offences carry the penalty of *kares*, which means the soul of the individual is cut off, and the person would die a premature death.

However, the difficulty in this approach is that if Moses needed a day to rebuke his people for each of the serious transgressions, why didn't he need any time to admonish the people for the other less serious offences? And why would he need 36 days altogether?

The answer lies in a better understanding of the significance attached to the number 36. It is not a coincidence that the number 36 appears in other contexts as well. On Chanukah we light a total of thirty-six candles (except the *shamosh*). There are 36 Tractates in the Babylonian Talmud. The Talmud speaks of 36 righteous people upon whose merit the world endures. The primordial light that was created on the first day of

Creation, before there was a sun and a moon, illuminated Adam's first Sabbath for a total of 36 hours.

What do all these references to 36 have in common, and how does it relate to Moses' last will and Testament?

Twice Chai

Thirty-six is twice the number chai-18, which means life. Double life implies that one is alive in two crucial ways: One in the body and the other in the spirit. For a person to be truly alive they must recognize the duality of life and the need to harmonize the two forms of life.

The first message that the number 36 imparts to us is that when we divorce one dimension of life from the other, when we separate the life of the soul from the life of the body we end up with the 36 transgressions that lead to kares, the soul being cut off from the body, G-d forbid. Chai is not enough, we need double-chai: the life of the body and soul together.

The light that illuminated the world during the first 36 hours of Adam's presence in this world was a form of light that was a combination of the physical and spiritual. While it was primarily a spiritual form of light, it also had the capacity to illuminate the physical darkness. Indeed, it was

so powerful that, we are told, with this light one was capable of seeing from one end of the world to the other.

However, this type of light could not withstand a world that is cruel, rebellious and defiant. It needs a receptive world. Hence, when Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, G-d ultimately withdrew this light and preserves it for us for the future Messianic Age. Had Adam and Eve resisted the temptation to eat the forbidden fruit, that light would have remained and they would have never experienced death.

Restoring the Primordial Light

From that day onward the mission of humankind is to rediscover those original 36 hours of sublime light, light that leads to eternal life. Indeed, we are told that in the Messianic Age, we will once again bask in that light and that as we get deeper into that Messianic Era we will live forever.

In the meantime, in His infinite kindness, G-d provided us with occasions when we can get a sample and a taste of this light. We enjoyed some of this light during the miracle of Chanukah, when the brave Macabees were willing to fight for their spiritual life. Hence we light 36 Chanukah candles throughout the Holiday of Chanukah.

This light can also be accessed at all times when we study Torah. Thus there are 36 Tractates of the Talmud.

There are people whose very lives reveal this dimension of light; the group of 36 righteous people. Their lives are influenced and illuminated by this primordial light, thus giving the world a taste of the future.

Moses: The Ultimate 36er

Of all the great people whose lives were expressions of this light, there was no one like Moses, about whom the Torah states that his face shone with such luminescence that people could not look at him. He had to wear a mask to filter out the light.

When Moses was about to take leave of the Jewish nation that he led for forty years, knowing that some of that light would again become more elusive, he wanted the Jewish nation to remember the number 36, so that they would realize the need to live a double-chai, two-dimensional life that reflects this light, and prepare them for the future.

Especially as they were to enter into the Promised Land, Moses wanted them to know that the Land of Israel had two dimensions as well. While it was a land like any other and had to be conquered by military means, there was another G-dly dimension to it of which they must always

be mindful. Otherwise, Moses warned them, they would not endure on the land.

Our Connection to Israel

Our brethren in the Land of Israel are engaged in a war to defend their lives from those who would want to see them destroyed. But, it would be a mistake to look at it as a battle for one dimension of life exclusively. This is a fight for the body and soul of Israel. It is not just about geography it is also about history. If we have no historical perspective and think as some that the conflict began right before the most recent news report, then we miss the whole point.

We must remember that our connection to the Land is tied in with the realization that the Land of Israel was given to us by G-d as an eternal inheritance; that it is the Holy Land that synthesizes the two dimensions of life.

We have no doubts that in the end we, with G-d's help, will prevail. But, that is not sufficient. We grieve when even one of our brave defenders is lost or hurt, and we must address our pleas to G-d that we had enough of suffering and we want and end to all hostilities and complete victory. We want Moshiach now!

But, in addition to our heartfelt pleas for G-d to bring an end to the terrorism against our Land and our people, we must also do our part in incorporating the two-dimensions of Israel into our lives with enhanced observance of the Mitzvos.

In last week's message, we mentioned the specific Mitzvos of Torah study, giving tzedakah, putting on Tefillin and affixing a Mezuzah as measures that can help our brethren in need.

A Two Dimensional Mitzvah

There is also another Mitzvah that ties in with this week's message of two-dimensional light: the mitzvah of lighting Shabbat candles. Interestingly, it has been observed that the initials of the phrase Neiros Shabbat Kodesh (Candles for the Holy Sabbath) spell the word *Neshek*, which is Hebrew for weapons. Our primary weapon (that must accompany the regrettable use of the conventional ones) is the introduction of greater G-dly light in our lives and throughout the world.

ESSAY FOURTEEN

WHEN ENOUGH IS NOT ENOUGH!

We fail when we embrace and institutionalize our G-d given limits.

Nothing is sweeter to G-d's "ears" than the music created by going beyond our "enough-ness" mindset.

ESSAY FOURTEEN

WHEN ENOUGH IS NOT ENOUGH!

Gold: The Root of Evil?

The book of Deuteronomy is Moses' last will and testament to the Jewish nation before they were to enter the Promised Land.

In the beginning of his soliloquy Moses subtly rebukes the people by reminding them of the places in which they sinned. One of the places Moses mentioned in the beginning of this week's parsha is "*di zahav*."

Rashi explains that there was actually no such place with this name. Rather the name "*di zahav*" is an allusion to the infamous worshipping of the Golden Calf, the most serious transgression committed by the Jewish nation in the desert.

The name "*di zahav*" actually means "enough gold." This name explains how it was that they degenerated to the point of idolatry: they had too much gold that they amassed from Egypt. And it was with this excessive amount of gold that they constructed the Golden Calf.

The implication of this statement is that too much wealth can corrupt.

However, when one examines the precise translation of this name it does not say "excessive gold" but rather "enough gold." This raises a few obvious questions:

First, if the sin was caused by the **excessive** amount of gold they possessed why does it say "*di zahav*-enough gold" and not "*rov zahav*-a prolific amount of gold"?

Second, why would having **enough** gold, as opposed to too much gold, be the cause of their sin?

Third, if merely possessing gold, in any amount, is a recipe for disaster, why the added word "*di*-enough"? It could have just said "*zahav*-gold"?

Fourth, the fact that they used gold for their idol-worship seems to be incidental to their sin. If they had made the idol out of silver or tin, for example, would that have been any less of a sin?

Why then does the Torah pick on an incidental aspect of their sin and not on a more pivotal aspect of their sin?

The Root of Idolatry

Although the simple meaning of Rashi's comment is that wealth—symbolized by gold—in excessive amounts can go

to people's heads and ultimately lead down a slippery slope to idolatry, one can detect a deeper meaning in the Torah's identification of the root cause of their sin as having "enough" gold.

Indeed, this insight conveyed by the phrase "*di zahav*-enough gold" will afford us a glimpse into the psychological/spiritual root of idolatry, and, by extension, the root cause of all of our spiritual shortcomings.

G-d Said "Enough!"

The Hebrew word *di* (or *dai*), which means enough, is part of the Divine name *Sha-dai* that is usually translated as Almighty. The Talmud provides a novel translation: "I am the one who said to the world: *dai*-enough!" When G-d created the universe, our Sages explain, He allowed it to expand until He declared, "enough!"

According to the teachings of Chassidus, G-d's declaration of "enough" was G-d's way of limiting the spiritual power of the universe. Had G-d not said "enough," the world would have possessed the ability to expand its spiritual horizons without the effort of any of its inhabitants. The world would, of its own accord, experience spiritual awareness that would make it unnecessary to struggle to discover and nurture a G-dly way of life.

Hence the word "di" implies a limitation of the world's natural capacity for growth. Without our intervention, the world would not develop on its own. With G-d's statement "enough!" He restricted the amount of Divine energy that would be channeled into our universe. The energy that is responsible for the very existence of our universe would be concealed until such time that we search for and discover the light.

We declare: "not enough!"

We must "open their eyes" to see the reality of G-d's continuous presence in our world and in our lives. We must never be partial to G-d saying, "enough!" We must never be content with a world that screens G-d's power. We must always reply to G-d by saying "we can never have enough G-dly light in our lives!" G-d's playing "hide and seek" with us was intended for us to seek and find Him and not to say, "if G-d wants to hide, who am I to expose His hiding place."

Limited Understanding

How do we apply the concept of "enough!" to the gold the Jews possessed in the desert and used for the creation of the golden calf? This term could suggest that they had a

restricted understanding of the power and potential of gold. They saw gold in its most physical and limited form. They did not see its true potential. They were affected by the Divine fiat "enough!" They only saw the external value of gold and not its true intrinsic value and cared not to search for its deeper character.

Gold's True Potential

What is the true potential of gold?

The Midrash tells us that gold was created for the Holy Temple exclusively. G-d, however, said that since it was already in existence, why not let others enjoy it.

In other words, when we use gold (and, by extension, any and all materials) we should recognize that it was intended for holy purposes. Even with the license we have to use gold for our own personal benefit, we must see beyond the mundane and utilize it for some positive and holy objective.

Moreover, since gold is so exquisite and rare; one of the earth's most precious commodities sought by monarchs and other wealthy and influential people, it is a sign that it is a metaphor for and a reflection of a more sublime spiritual dimension of gold. Gold, as is true of all physical objects and phenomena, exists on many planes. And just as it would be ludicrous and short-sighted to use a gold plate

for garbage removal, it is equally foolish to use gold for strictly materialistic benefit. In either situation, the person has a view of gold that was affected by the "enough" syndrome.

Open Our Eyes!

When G-d said "enough!" he meant that we should open our eyes and see the unlimited nature of the divine energy within the limited world.

To respect G-d's command of "enough" and institutionalize it is the equivalent of denying helping the poor with the argument that if G-d wanted the person to have food, money etc., He would not have made him poor. While we cannot understand why G-d allowed this individual to be poor, we do know that if G-d made him poor it was with the stipulation that we reverse His work.

If we see the "enough-ness" of the world, its limits and lack of spiritual sophistication instituted by G-d, it is our mission to undo that "enough-ness."

To see gold only in its most physical form and purpose is the beginning of the process that can lead to idolatry because in a subtle form it is idolatry. It represents the glorification of the most external and superficial aspects of existence. It ignores and denies its inner spirit, i.e., the G-

dly energy that suffuses all of creation. Thus, had they appreciated the true nature of their abundant gold, it would not have posed a problem. Precisely because they had "enough" gold that their possession of gold was excessive and led them to its eventual worship.

Had it been silver the crime would not have been as great. Precisely because it was gold that possess far greater value than silver, it constituted a greater breach when they failed to realize the true value of the gold. This can be compared to one who addresses a king as if he was a commoner. It is a far greater offense than if he would have done the same to one of the king's ministers.

Are We "Enough-niks?"

We are living in the end of exile. Exile is the most dramatic manifestation of the "enough" syndrome. Exile, is described by our Sages as a time and place and mindset that belies the true Divine nature of existence. And one of the casualties of being in exile for so long is that we have become so comfortable with "enough" G-dly energy.

Imbued with a Galus-exile mentality we tend to carve out a comfortable niche for our Jewish and spiritual life and refuse to see beyond the horizon. We feel content with the most peripheral aspects of life; we see gold in its most physical form, in its state of "enough-ness."

Our mission now is to break out of this syndrome, and to "open our eyes" and see the true purpose of existence and of all the things we possess. When we do that we will have paved the way for Moshiach who will usher in the age about which the prophet says: "And Your Master will no longer be cloaked," the end of the "enough" syndrome.

ESSAY FIFTEEN

THE ESSENCE OF GOLD

There are two ways of viewing wealth.

We can either see it through a smokescreen or see its naked essence.

Seen through the smokescreen of human nature it will corrupt.

Removing the fog transforms wealth into a powerful vehicle to spiritual growth.

ESSAY FIFTEEN

THE ESSENCE OF GOLD

Location, Location, Location?

The book of Deuteronomy begins with an introductory verse:

> "These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel, on the other side of the Jordan, in the wilderness, in the Aravah, opposite the Red Sea, between Paran and Tophel, and Lavan and Chatzeiros and Di Zahav."

Rashi explains that this apparently cryptic listing of places refers to the places where the Jewish nation angered G-d. Out of respect for the people, Moses did not rebuke them directly; rather, he hinted at their sins by mentioning the places where they sinned.

In truth, Rashi observes, the last location Moses mentioned, *Di Zahav,* is not the name of a place but rather an allusion to the creation of the Golden Calf. The words "*Di Zahav*" should be translated as "abundance of gold." The sin of the

Golden Calf was made possible because of the abundance of gold with which the people were blessed.

The Four Questions

Several questions come to mind:

First, why is this the only sin Moses alluded to by its cause and not by location or by the description of the sin itself?

Second, did G-d implicate gold as the cause of their sin? The people created the Golden Calf as a replacement for Moses. Now if they hoped to replace Moses with an inanimate object, what difference would it make whether it was fashioned out of silver, copper, or even stone or wood?

Third, why did G-d give them an abundance of gold if it He knew that it would lead them to idol worship? Why did they need all that gold?

Fourth, why is the allusion to the sin of the Golden Calf the last of the hints of rebuke? Wasn't their worship of the Golden Calf one of the first acts of rebellion against G-d?

(See preceding essay for a slightly different, complementary, approach based on the translation of the word *di* as "enough" rather than "too much.")

Extrinsic or Intrinsic Value?

When a useful commodity is rare people ascribe greater value to it. If our streets were paved with gold or if it grew on trees, gold would lose its appeal. This suggests that we ascribe value to most things based on their availability. We attribute very little value to the dust of the earth because it is so plentiful.

There are, of course, some notable exceptions to the rule. A parent does not lose feelings for his children when a new child is born. Every child has inestimable value to a parent. But, the exceptions prove the rule. A stranger may not feel the same way about many acquaintances as he or she would about just a few.

And even parents, while never losing feelings for their children, may have a special place for a single child that a parent with many cannot understand.

The psychology behind this phenomenon is rooted in our inability to truly appreciate the intrinsic value of material things. When items are rare we are attracted to them by their uniqueness, but when they are easily accessible, we ascribe little importance to them. If we could see beneath the surface and appreciate the material's G-d given importance, abundance would not detract from real value.

This phenomenon, where proliferation of an object overshadows its intrinsic value, can be found in the realm

of time as well. We may value Shabbos more than the weekdays because it comes only once a week, not because of its real spiritual value. But we also value Holidays over Shabbos because they occur only once a year, despite the fact that Shabbos is considered to be more intrinsically holy.

In summary, the value of all three aspects of existence, space, time and soul (the three elements which comprise all of physical and spiritual existence, as described in the early Kabbalistic work *Sefer* Yetzirah) is challenged when they are ubiquitous and in great abundance. The more we can see of them actually diminishes the way we value them.

Dispelling the Smokescreen

However, human nature notwithstanding, the Torah was given to us to change that mindset. The objective of the Torah is to keep repetition from weakening our appreciation for G-d's gifts, whether they be an object or place, a time or experience, or another person.

One description of the events surrounding the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai was that "the entire mountain was engulfed with smoke." The Hebrew word for smoke, *oshan,* is said to be an acronym for the three aforementioned elements, *Olam*-world or space; *shanah-year or time, nefesh, soul or energy.* When we examine these three

words we can see how they obscure the idea of intrinsic value and serve as a smokescreen.

The word *olam*, we have pointed out on many occasions, is related to the word which means concealment. When we look at physical objects that occupy space we tend to measure their value by the amount of space they occupy, which eclipses its internal and spiritual value.

The word *shanah,* which means year, is related to the word for repetition. As stated above, time loses its value when it is repetitive. People need new experiences to get excited.

The third smokescreen is *nefesh*, which means soul and is a word shared by the animating force of every creature. However, the human being is a composite of a G-dly soul as well as an animating soul. The Animal Soul, which gives us life, is also responsible for all of our physical desires and frailties. When we fail morally we often hear the refrain, "I'm only human." In truth, a human being's animating soul is not his or her true essence. It is the G-dly soul, which desires a relationship with G-d, which is the true source of life and the true identity of the person. To say, "I'm only human," without the smokescreen of the Animal Soul is to say, "I have a G-dly soul, which can exercise control over our Animal nature."

However, because we only see the effects of the animating soul it obscures the existence and expression of the G-dly soul.

The Challenge of Humanity

One of the challenges of humanity is to open our eyes to see beneath the surface of an object, experience (or time) or person. One with a perceptive eye will see the beauty and sanctity of everything and realize that these qualities stem from G-d, and ought to be harnessed for a higher G-dly purpose.

We can now appreciate the Torah's identifying the cause of the creation of the Golden Calf as an abundance of gold. Contrary to the perception that gold was enticing to the people, the abundance of gold actually diminished its value to them. Due to its profusion, they failed to see gold's intrinsic value and saw only its extrinsic value. Seeing only the exterior of an object, situation or person separates that entity from its G-dly source and sets it up as an independent existence—this is the essence of idolatry.

If they had not possessed gold in such great abundance they might have reflected on its inner value. They would then have concluded that it must have been created for a G-dly objective, such as the creation of a Sanctuary for G-d. The devaluing of gold engendered an attitude of detaching

it from G-d, which allowed the people to degenerate into idolatry, which denied our connection to Him and solidified our glorification of the material world.

Messianic Age: Opens our Eyes

This phenomenon of not seeing the intrinsic value of things is one of the defining characteristics of Galus-exile and being able to see beneath the surface of everything is one of the defining aspects of the Messianic Age.

"In that time," Maimonides writes at the very end of his work, Yad Hachazakah, "... all the delicacies will be as abundant as dust, and the preoccupation of the world will be knowing G-d exclusively..."

The fact that all the delicacies will be so abundant means that we will no longer be enamored by the exterior of all that we possess but by its internal and intrinsic value. Since the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d we will be exposed to the real value of gold and every other element of our mundane existence.

We can now answer the four questions we raised at the beginning of this essay:

The Answers

First, why is this the only sin where Moses alluded to its cause rather than the transgression's location?

The answer is that the location was not responsible. On the contrary, they were situated at the foot of Mount Sinai, and empowered by G-d to see through the smokescreen. That location was certainly not the reason they constructed the Golden Calf. Rather it was the proliferation of gold and uncoupling of the exterior from its Divine essence that was the cause of their rebellion.

Second, why is G-d implicating the gold as the cause of their sin?

In truth, it's not the gold itself, it is the sense that our physical world is detached from its G-dly source, which empowers us to create our own leader, even if it is a Golden Calf.

Third, why did G-d give the people an abundance of gold if He knew it would lead them to idol worship? Why did they need all that gold?

The proliferation of gold was intended to help them overcome the challenge of seeing only the exterior of things. Instead, G-d challenged them to see the true spiritual value of gold so they would use it to create the Mishkan, the Sanctuary in the desert.

Fourth, why is the allusion to the sin of the Golden Calf placed at the end of the hints of rebuke?

It may be suggested that the order of the sins relates to the time when that particular sin will be **corrected**. The very last vice that we will be rid of is the devaluing of everything around us. That will happen, as Maimonides suggests, in the more advanced stages of the Messianic Era, when the entire world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d. Meanwhile, we prepare for such time by endeavoring to "open our eyes" to see beneath the surface and thereby connect everything to its Source.

ESSAY SIXTEEN
OUR DAY IN COURT

We demand equal representation and treatment of people. We must hear both sides of a dispute before deciding who is right.

We too have two internal forces. We must not allow our natural instincts (derived from our "Animal Soul") to voice their opinion before we listen to our conscience; our G-dly soul.

ESSAY SIXTEEN

OUR DAY IN COURT

Fairness to our Good Impulse

Equality and fairness is one of the basic requirements of Jewish law, particularly in the execution of justice. From the verse of this week's parsha: "Hear out your fellow man and judge fairly..." the rabbis derive the necessity for the judge not to hear one side of the case from one litigant, when the other litigant is not present. The first impression is likely to leave an indelible imprint on the heart and mind of the judge.

A story is told of the eighteenth century sage, Rabbi *Yonatan Eibishitz*, known – among other qualities – for his sharp mind and wit, who applied this principle to our own lives.

Once he was asked how he was able to prevail over his evil impulse before his Bar Mitzvah. According to tradition, the good impulse dos not enter the person until his Bar Mitzvah. How then did he manage to combat his evil inclination before his good inclination could assist him?

Rabbi *Yonatan's* answer was that he invoked the principle of fairness and equality in judgment. "Whenever the evil inclination would come to me and try to get me to sin," Rabbi *Yonatan* explained, "I would dismiss him by saying it is not fair that I should listen to your side of the issue without the benefit of hearing the other side, the side of the good impulse...

The Two (Three?) Souls

The Talmud states that we are in possession of two impulses. The mystical tradition of Judaism elaborates that we are actually talking about two distinct souls.. The first soul we possess is the Animal soul which is responsible for all of our natural impulses and drives, some of which are actually good such as compassion and kindness. But, the defining aspect of this animal soul is that it is self-centered and is driven by its emotional and selfish needs.

There is, however, a second soul, known as the G-dly soul which is actually a part of G-d (Tanya Chapter Two). This soul is driven by its desire to connect to G-d and to make G-d's agenda a reality in our world.

Clearly these souls do not see eye to eye, so how is one to decide which soul to follow? Chassidic thought teaches us that there is a third entity that has to make the decision between the two "litigants." This is the third soul, called

the "Intellectual soul" which mediates between the two other souls. The mind, utilizing its ability to see things objectively has to decide which is the proper path.

In finding the proper path, the intellectual soul must never listen to the first litigant, without the input of the other. The import of this is that the intellectual soul can very easily be influenced by the animal soul's penchant at rationalizing even the most negative and selfish behavior.

This would be similar to the judge who hears one side without the presence of the other litigant. The absence of a counterbalance to the first impression that is formed, will affect his ability to make an objective decision..

(Obviously it does not mean that we shouldn't listen to our G-dly soul unless we first hear from our animal soul, because, the animal soul, in fact, has a "head start" as mentioned in the story of Rabbi *Yonatan Eibishitz*).

The Perennial Struggle

The struggle between the two souls possessed by each individual parallels the perennial struggle between the Jewish people and the forces of *Galus.* (exile, or spiritual alienation).

The paradigm for both the macrocosmic as well as microcosmic battles between the forces of holiness and the

forces of evil is the struggle between the Patriarch Jacob and the guardian angel of his brother Esau. Their wrestling match, which lasted all night, is illustrative of the conflicts between the two souls and the Jewish nation versus the forces of darkness. The guardian angel struck Jacob and injured him in his thigh. This, our sages say, represents Tisha B'Av, the day that our enemies dealt us a devastating blow. And while they caused us untold misery and suffering, they could not destroy us.

The end of the story with Jacob and the angel is that with the arrival of dawn the struggle was over and the radiant rays of the sun healed Jacob's limping gait. The analogue of this is that ultimately, with the dawn of the new day – the Messianic Age – the struggle will be over and the ills of the Jewish people will be healed by G-dly rays of light.

Close your Ears!

Our means of preparing for this final victory over the forces of evil is to never allow the animal soul within us to be heard without the presence of the G-dly soul. In practical terms this means that whenever we are driven to do something that is motivated by desire and self-interest, we should always endeavor to ask ourselves, what benefit will accrue from this behavior to our G-dly existence? How

will this accomplish our life's goal of making this world into a more G-dly world?

When the G-dly soul within each and every one of us begins to set the agenda, we will be prepared for the time that the light of Moshiach will transform all of the sorrows of the past into joy; Tisha B'Av will become the greatest day of celebration

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

TISHA B'AV-LOSS OF SANITY

Mourning the destruction of the Temple is about grieving the loss of G-dly innocence and sanity in our world.

Prayers for the Temple is about the restoration of G-d's palpable presence in our physical existence.

The rebuilt Temple will thus restore innocence and sanity to a terribly flawed world!

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

TISHA B'AV: LOSS OF SANITY

Why the Obsession?

Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av is our national day of mourning.

The primary reason for this fast day is that twice, hundreds of years apart, our Holy Temple (Beit Hamikdash) in Jerusalem was destroyed, first by the Babylonians and then by the Romans. Jews, since then, have never forgotten the tragedy of the loss of their Temple and continue to pray daily for its restoration.

As we approach Tisha B'Av it is appropriate to reflect on the significance of the Temple.

One could ask, why does the destruction of a building, albeit a very important one, occupy such prominence in our lives. Were not the other Jewish tragedies of the past, such as the Crusades, the Inquisition, pogroms and particularly the Holocaust, considerably more painful than the loss of the Temple. A building can be replaced, but the

devastation of human lives cannot. Why then do we place inordinate attention on the destruction of the Temple?

Moreover, at the time of the destruction of the Temple by the evil Romans and in its aftermath, they also massacred an estimated two million Jews! Why then do we place more significance on the loss of a mere structure, albeit a magnificent and holy one, when the horrific loss of life should take precedence?

Coming Face to Face with Divine Truth

The answer lies in the realization that the Temple was more than a magnificent structure. It was more than a national shrine which united all Jews. It was more than a focal point of the Jewish people; a center of scholarship and justice. To be sure, it was all that, and, qualitatively speaking, much more.

The Beis Hamikdash was the one place on earth where a person was able to experience the presence of G-d. It was the one place were one would come face to face with absolute truth. The Temple was the place, and the only place, chosen by G-d – not by man – to reveal Himself to the world. And in face of this realization no evil can flourish.

When a Jew would come to the Temple he or she would leave a different person; one who came face to face with truth, coupled with the realization of who they were in G-d's scheme. Equipped with this awareness he or she would then be motivated to return home and implement His will in his or her own life.

Had the Temple Not been Destroyed...

Had the Temple not been destroyed, the intensity of the Temple's inspiration would have illuminated the world with this G-dly light and awareness. There would have been no need for the Jews to have been exiled, compelling them to bring the truth of G-d and His commandments to the world the hard way. The world would have been transformed into the "utopian" dream G-d had intended it to become when He created it, and all the evil which transpired during our exile would have been prevented.

Loss of Sanity

When we bemoan the destruction of the Temples, we are simultaneously expressing our grief over the loss of sanity, the sense of purposefulness and sensitivity which was lost together with the physical structure of the Temple.

True, there were untold tragedies that accompanied the destruction of the Temple and those we experienced in other historical periods, but they were all facilitated by the loss of the Temple. Without the overt presence of G-d that was channeled through the Beis Hamikdash, it was possible for humans to degenerate even to the point of utter depravity.

When we pray for the restoration of the Temple we are actually praying for the restoration of G-d's presence among us and our ability to see truth and experience true peace, both inner as well as universal.

Why Build it on *that* Site?

One is entitled to ask, why do we need to build the Temple in its previous location? Wouldn't it be simpler to build it elsewhere, in places that are far less controversial?

The answer is that if the Temple would be built by us based on our own selection of location and our determination of its architecture etc., it would not be anything more than a glorified synagogue. It would not channel G-d's energy' it would merely express our own limited spirituality and would be tainted by our own failings as well.

To insure that the Temple would channel G-d's clarity of vision, truth and sanity, it must come through G-d Himself. And this we accomplish by following G-d's unequivocal statements in the Torah that we build it on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem where the first two Temples stood. In addition, the construction of the third Temple must conform to the precise instructions recorded in the Biblical book of Ezekiel.

May we see the building of the third Temple through Moshiach, our righteous Redeemer, imminently!

ESSAY EIGHTEEN

WHAT ARE WE MOURNING?

An anniversary of an event is when the event come to life again.

An anniversary of a tragedy is when we focus on what we lost and endeavor to restore it with even greater vigor.

ESSAY EIGHTEEN

WHAT ARE WE MOURNING?

Anniversary of Tragedies?

During the period beginning on the Seventeenth of Tammuz – the anniversary of the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem – through Tisha B'Av – the anniversary of the destruction of the Holy temple in Jerusalem – the Jewish people have, for the last 1900 plus years, mourned the loss of the Bais Hamikdash, the Holy Temple, the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of Jews into exile.

Tisha B'av is also the anniversary of many other tragedies throughout Jewish history.

The first tragedy to have occurred on Tisha B'Av, recorded in the Talmud, is the episode of the Jews who wept when they were told by the spies sent to Israel by Moses, that the Promised Land was rather dreadful and unpromising. G-d then declared that as a punishment for weeping needlessly, they will be given ample reason to weep on this night in the future. That fateful night was Tisha B'Av.

This tragic saga which opened up the day to subsequent tragedy is highlighted in this week's parshas Devarim, which recounts Moses' reprimanding of the Jewish people before their entry into the Land of Israel.

The question can be raised, why the Torah here highlights only this sin? Why doesn't it mention the sin of the Golden Calf? (It does allude to it in the very first verse, but, it does not mention it explicitly as it does the sin of the spies.)

One answer is that it was this sin in particular that had ramifications for the future up until (and, hopefully, not through) our own generation.

In 1492 Columbus was a Jew?

In more recent history, Tisha B'Av was the day the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492.

Incidentally, Columbus – who many think may have been a secret Jew – was supposed to have set sail for America on that day, but postponed his journey for the next day.

Historians wonder whether he postponed his trip because he did not want to set sail on a day as tragic as Tisha B'Av, or perhaps, as others have conjectured, there were so many boats in the harbor waiting to transport the fleeing Jews out of Spain, that his ship could not make it out of harbor? Either way it seems that his fateful trip which led to the

"discovery" of America, the place where so many Jews were to seek safe haven and flourish, would be somehow connected to Tisha B'Av, the day of mourning and dispersion!)

In more recent times, we know that the first World War began on Tisha B'Av. Now, if the second World War was a continuation of the first, as many have stated, then it can also be said that the Holocaust really began on Tisha B'Av.

Unlucky Day?

Based on the above, many of our readers are no doubt wondering as to whether Tisha B'Av is an "unlucky" day, when unhappy occurrences are more likely to occur. Or, perhaps we should just view these multiple tragedies that occurred on Tisha B'Av as coincidences.

The Torah view is that none of these two approaches are accurate. Judaism is not a superstitious religion and Judaism certainly does not subscribe to the belief in coincidences. Everything that happens, the *Ba'al Shem Tov* taught us, happens by Divine Providence and must therefore have a purpose. And if an event, and particularly, a confluence of eerily similar events, is brought to our attention, there must be something we can learn from the occurrence in our way of serving G-d.

It must be noted that learning lessons are not synonymous with finding explanations for an event. And while we cannot find any rational explanation for the Holocaust and other tragedies, we must learn lessons from these events; otherwise they would not have shown up on our radar.

What did we Lose?

To understand what we must learn from the tragic events of Tisha B'Av we must focus on the central reason for its observance: the destruction of the Two Temples.

The loss of the Temple on Tisha B'Av represents far more than the loss of Judaism's most important shrine. The Temple was the place through which G-d channeled His presence into our world. With the loss of the Temple, the forces of evil which can only exist in a vacuum – when G-d's presence is concealed – the potential for greater evil ensued.

(See preceding essay for an analysis of the loss of truth and sanity as a result of the loss of the Temple and why we can't just build it in another, less controversial location before Moshiach comes.)

Kabbalists tell us that the anniversary of an event is when the spiritual energies which cause the event to occur are more pronounced. Therefore, Tisha B'Av is a time when G-

d's withdrawal from the world, as it were, is more keenly felt.

Most Suitable Time for Redemption!

Does this mean that it is inevitable that Tisha B'Av will bring tragedy in its wake?
The answer is absolutely not!

On Tisha B'Av, because of the fact that we feel the loss of G-d's presence more keenly than any other day, it challenges us to mourn that loss. The more we mourn the loss, and, more importantly, the more we yearn for the rebuilding of the Temple through Moshiach, we actually possess the capacity to transform the losses of Tisha B'Av into gains. Tisha B'Av is the most suitable time for the Redemption, precisely because it is the time when we sense the need for it more than any other time.

Birth of Moshiach

Indeed, our sages tell us that the birth of Moshiach occurred on Tisha B'Av at the same time that the Temple was being destroyed. This means that the soul of Moshiach, which is present in every generation, impatiently waiting to be called upon to usher in the Final Redemption, first

entered the world at the very time the Temple was being destroyed and the onset of the period of exile.

How Much Longer?!

We mourn on Tisha B'Av not for the sake of wallowing in grief, but to feel the void in our lives, which, in turn, motivates us to cry out to G-d: *Ad Masai*?! How much longer must we live in a world of exile, where evil can exist? When will you bring the final Redemption, not only for our sake, but for Your sake, G-d?

ESSAY NINETEEN

WRONG WAY DO NOT ENTER

"A journey begins with but one step," is a popular adage.

Our path to total and immediate Redemption needs one small, even imperceptible, redirection

ESSAY NINETEEN

WRONG WAY DO NOT ENTER

The Spies and Tisha B'Av

This week's parsha, *Devarim*, is always read on the Shabbat before the national day of mourning, Tisha B'Av. Since there are no coincidences, especially not in the Torah, we must conclude that there is a close relationship with the Torah reading and the day that is the anniversary of the destruction of the Holy Temple and the commencement of thousands of years of exile.

It takes only a cursory view of the parsha to discover its connection to Tisha B'Av. This Torah reading relates how Moses rebukes, albeit gently and subtly, the Jewish people for all of their mistakes that they were guilty of during their forty year sojourn in the desert.

Of all the misadventures of the Jews then, the one that stands out in its relationship with Tisha B'Av, is the incident with the spies, which our sages tell us culminated on Tisha B'Av! By rectifying the causes of that misfortune, we can also undo the negative effects of Tisha B'Av, and

bring Moshiach and the final Redemption.

Where did they Turn?

When discussing the spies that were sent to scout the land, the Torah describes their journey with the opening word "*Vayifnu*-and they turned [and they climbed the mountain]." The expression "and they turned" is somewhat problematic. Couldn't the text have stated "and they climbed the mountain?" What did they turn away from? Indeed, when the Torah described their journey in the preceding book of Numbers, it just says plainly "And they climbed."

Or Hachaim, one of the great Bible commentators, explains that it means that they turned away from the right path. Before they commenced their mission, they were righteous. No sooner did they begin traveling that they turned away from the right path.

It should be noted that the Torah does not say that they did anything wrong at that time. But, at that point they already made a crucial turn and movement that affected their decision in the future.

One may still ask the question why then in the book of Numbers when the story of the spies was first mentioned dose it not mention that they turned?

Perhaps, we do not always have the ability to see when a

person turns off the road. It may start as a subtle movement of the steering wheel. When it first happens no one notices it. Only after the turn devolves into a u-turn can we all see how it started when they made the first slight movement in the wrong direction.

Attitude Change

The lesson for ourselves is clear. Whenever we want to make amends for our past mistakes, it does not suffice to go back in time and isolate the errant behavior, excise it and go on with life. It is imperative that we go back to the point in time when we made the wrong turn, i.e., a change in attitude.

What is true in the realm of dealing with evil is equally true about embracing goodness. By changing our attitude towards the positive and holy in life, we are already on the road to Redemption. To be sure, going in the right direction must be followed by concrete action. Nevertheless, the mere decision to turn our lives around can change the landscape of the entire world.

The fact that their turning was not mentioned initially because it was imperceptible at first until it degenerated into outright rebellion can be applied in the realm of good as well.

One's journey in the right direction does not require giant steps, at first. Even the slightest, mot subtle movement in the right direction represents a seismic shift, the fruit of which we will all see in the end.

Criteria for Moshiach

It is interesting to note that Maimonides, when discussing the criteria for the Moshiach, states that he will "influence of all Israel to go in its [Torah's] path." The road to Redemption begins with just one turn onto the right path, even before we correct all of our mistakes and perform all the Mitzvos.

Our generation has witnessed incredible changes for the good. The nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century were punctuated with individuals, movements, and events that undermined both the material and spiritual well-being of the Jewish people. In recent decades and years, however, we have witnessed a resurgence of all facets of Jewish life. Of all these changes, the most dramatic and encouraging is the decision of many individuals and groups to go in the right direction.

Our sages assure us that one mitzvah will lead to another, so that these changes will lead to many more. But, perhaps, as important, is the realization that Teshuvah — translated as repentance, and more correctly as return — involves

one's initial movement onto the right path. In the spirit of our sages declaration: "If Israel does Teshuvah they will be redeemed immediately," we, as a nation, have turned onto the right path and are ready for the future Redemption, at which time we will celebrate Tisha B'Av as a joyous holiday!

May we experience this transformation this year!

ESSAY TWENTY

GRAMMATICALLY CORRECT

Who is he real realist? The pessimist or the optimist?

Both, when combined!

We believe that the future will be good, but we must act as if it wouldn't happen without our efforts.

ESSAY TWENTY

GRAMMATICALLY CORRECT

Double Negative

In the English language, a double negative is a positive. In Russian (and Yiddish as well) a double negative is a negative. When an English teacher tried to impart this grammatical lesson to a student, the teacher added that there is no language in which a double positive becomes a negative. One student pipes us and says: "yeah, right..."

In the week before Tisha B'Av, when we were struck with repeated negatives (destruction of two Temples, destruction of Beitar, expulsion from Spain in 1492, just to name a few), this lesson in grammar comes in handy.

There are three attitudes we can take in our lives: a) The cynical approach, b) the pessimistic/realist approach or, c) the spiritual/optimistic approach.

The Cynic

For the cynic, no matter how many positives are stacked

up, he will always find a way of minimizing their true impact and maximize and often grossly exaggerate the potential for negative.

Our generation has witnessed unprecedented and repeated good. From medical miracles to the survival and growth of Israel, from the proliferation of knowledge to the infinite acts of goodness and kindness in recent years, our lives have been enriched with infinite G-dly blessing.

Yet, the cynic has a way of dampening these positives by accentuating the negatives that still persist.

Another cynical approach is to minimize one's appreciation for the many good things precisely because these positives are so frequent they have become commonplace. When so much good occurs in our lives, rather than generating great feelings of elation, the cynic will dismiss them by saying, "Big deal, I've had this, fill in the blank, thing, so many times, it means very little to me."

The "Realist"

We can also follow the "realist" approach to life—the "Russian model"—where a double negative is indeed a negative. The realist who sees only darkness cannot cope with life without doing something to drown out the misery. People, with this so-called realistic approach to life have to

distract themselves from their misery. In Russia they may use Vodka to accomplish this, but in the United States we entertain ourselves out of our negative perception of reality to keep our sanity.

The Optimist

And then there is the third approach—the grammatically correct approach— in which we can take two negatives and turn them into a positive.

Fortunate for the Jewish nation, we have survived this long, notwithstanding all of the repeated negatives, because we had an uncanny ability to see things in their true light. We were able to see through the negatives and to see the positive emerging from and actually embedded within the negative.

Hide and Seek

The following parable illustrates the point. A father was once playing hide-and-seek with his children. When the father hid in a poor hiding place and his children were able to find him quickly they continued to play, receiving great satisfaction from their ability to easily find their father. However, when the father used a really good hiding place and his children could not find him, the two children

reacted differently.

One child gave up. He lost interest in the game. The second child, however, got even more excited about the game because of the new challenge it presented to him.

He knew that his father must be there.

When G-d gave us the doubled negatives on Tisha B'Av, he was playing hide-and-seek, as it were. His apparent abandonment of the Jewish people—his children—generated two reactions. Some of us took their inability to find G-d within the suffering and misery as a sign that G-d was no longer with them.

They gave up searching. To be sure, we ought not sit in judgment of these individuals, particularly considering it was they who went through the suffering, and it was certainly no game for them.

Those Who Never Gave Up.

However, there were always significant numbers of Jews who did not stop believing and searching. They must have realized that G-d must be here and that their inability to find Him was an indication that He was giving us a greater challenge.

After confronting the "double adversity," there were many Jews who would say to G-d: "G-d, in spite of your efforts to

make me despair and forsake my connection to you, I will remain loyal. I will never give up looking for Your radiant face and remain hopeful that you will quickly bring an end to all of our—and the entire world's suffering—imminently!" Some actually said these, or very similar, words. Most others simply expressed the very same sentiment in their unrelenting faith in the coming of Moshiach, or in the way they so admirably maintained their connection to Judaism and the Jewish people.

This is what we mean when we say that two negatives become a positive. When we see how the negatives are a test and discover the presence of G-d hiding within the disguise, we actually have the power to generate goodness and happiness in the most literal sense of these words.

And while we may fast and mourn the suffering of the past, beginning with the destruction of our two Temples, deep down we know that these tragedies are intended for us to overcome and to have them ultimately transformed into double positives. We accomplish this by never losing hope and faith in the glorious future G-d will bring, imminently!

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

DOUBLE EDGED SWORD

When you see a person whose past leaves much to be desired and who needs guidance, rather than tell them simply what they did wrong, show them how they could use the same energies for good.

Instead of focusing on their negative choices, emphasize how the very same circumstances that led to their degradation can be a catalyst for growth.

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

DOUBLE EDGED SWORD

New Names

We begin reading the book of *Devarim*, Deuteronomy, the final book of the Five Books of Moses.

This book begins with Moses recounting the various travels of the Jewish people through the desert. In the beginning of Moses soliloquy, Moses simply mentions the names of the places they traveled through on their way out of Egypt to the Promised Land.

Rashi observes that these names were never mentioned before. And concludes that they were really not names of places, but allusions to the sins they committed.

Why did Moses not simply spell out their transgressions if he was interested in rebuking them before his passing as Rashi states?

Rashi answers that out of respect for their honor, Moses deliberately spoke ambiguously.

Moses' Change of Tone

The question has been raised by commentators. If we just turn a few pages, we will see that Moses eventually took off his gloves and reprimanded them quite openly and unambiguously. Obviously, Moses felt that constructive criticism would be legitimate. Why then did he speak so subtly to them at the beginning of this book?

The simple answer is that one must always begin to rebuke someone softly, subtly and with concern for their dignity, so that they are not embarrassed or crushed by the onslaught of harsh criticism, even if the person who is doing the reproof means well.

One could perhaps add a deeper understanding to what was really going on here.

To understand the dynamics of Moses opening his address to his people with hints about their negative past, let us cite one of the "places" he mentioned: "*Di zahav*." Literally this means, as Rashi states, "an abundance of gold." Moses meant to allude to the fact that their worshipping of the golden calf was a result of the excessive amounts of gold they had.

This raises a simple question. We know that the Israelites did not look for this gold; it was given to them by G-d, who pleaded with them to take the gold and silver of the Egyptians with them. Why then blame them for the

abundance of gold they amassed, when that happened with G-d's consent and at His behest?

Direction; Not Criticism

The answer to this question—which is the key to answer the earlier question as to why Moses used subtle language to rebuke them—is that in truth, these words were not intended as a put down at all. They were meant to show the people how certain neutral or even positive things in a person's life can be a double edged sword. They can be used for good or for evil.

When G-d gave them incredible amounts of wealth, His intention—which later materialized—was that they use it for building a Sanctuary for G-d. However, alas, it can, and it was, also used for nefarious purposes such as building and worshipping an idol, the very antithesis of a Sanctuary to G-d.

Moses message to them was, therefore, not intended to put them down—even as constructive criticism, for that came later. His intention rather was to provide them with a valuable lesson in their lives. Moses was giving them direction not criticsm.

Everything you have, experience, know or do, can be directed and diverted into the realm of goodness and

holiness; and conversely, we can take the most positive resources and utilize it for evil.

In truth, Moses' message was actually the reverse. Moses was not only emphasizing how even neutral and positive things can be perverted, he was also trying to impress upon the generation that was to enter into the Promised Land, that even those things that turned into negativity can be turned around and used for the good.

The very same gold that blinds people can also be transformed into the means to build a land, home and life that is completely positive and holy.

Moses, in effect, was not even rebuking them, albeit subtly, he was uplifting them, by demonstrating how what was negative can be channeled into the positive arena.

Once Moses accentuated the positive—even as it pertained to their indiscretions—he was able to follow it with constructive criticism, to help them sever their ties to their negative past.

And this is the powerful lesson the Torah conveys to us in this opening narrative:

The Lesson

When you see a person whose past leaves much to be desired and who needs guidance, rather than tell them

simply what they did wrong, show them how they could use the same energies for good. Instead of focusing on their negative choices, emphasize how the very same circumstances that led to their degradation can be a catalyst for growth.

Only after exposing the potential for good, which serves to uplift the person, rather than crush him, can we then apply constructive criticism to the same individual.

Positive in Tisha B'Av

As we stand in the days before Tisha B'Av—the national day of mourning for the destruction of the two Holy Temples and subsequent deplorable conditions of exile—it is crucial that we attempt to see the positive even in the sadness of the day.

Even as we follow the Halachic requirements of fasting etc., one should realize that these negative days will imminently be transformed into joyous Holidays, with the coming of Moshiach and the imminent Redemption.

ESSAY TWENTY-TWO

MOSES REBUKES-PRAISES

While Moses was berating his people for their worshipping of the Golden Calf, he was also attempting to invoke G-d's love for His people, whose generosity knew no bounds.

ESSAY TWENTY-TWO

MOSES REBUKES-PRAISES

No Holds-barred!

The book of Deuteronomy that we commence reading this week begins with Moses' rebuke of the Jewish people. Indeed, much of this book recounts some of the harshest, no holds-barred, criticisms ever leveled at a nation.

This is why it is puzzling the comment of Rashi that when Moses began to rebuke them he did so subtly and diplomatically. Instead of telling them that they committed this or that sin, he referred to the locations where they sinned and even employed pseudo locations whose names were oblique references to their past transgressions and errant behavior.

Di Zahav: No Such Place

For example: One of the places Moses mentioned was Di Zahav. In fact, Rashi insists, there was no place that is so named elsewhere in the Torah. Its translation, "much gold" was an allusion to the large volume of gold they possessed

and used for the construction of the infamous "Golden Calf."

The question that arises here is why did Moses merely hint about their transgressions here in the opening part of his 36/37 day monologue, while not pulling any punches in later parts of his parting words? If subtlety and diplomacy are preferred to frankness why did he change his tone later and employed quite tough language?

Wear Two Hats

One answer suggests that it is to teach us that when we rebuke another we must simultaneously serve as that individual's "defender" before G-d, or the "Court of Heavenly opinion."

On the one hand, we must let the sinners realize that they have sinned, and not make excuses for their behavior lest they will not change their errant ways.

On the other hand, we must simultaneously do everything in our power to minimize the severity of the other's sin and even accentuate the good so that G-d will judge that person favorably. In other words, we have to wear two hats; that of the prosecutor and that of the defender.

Parallel Nature of Moses' Rebukes

This paradoxical approach to dealing with others explains why Moses chose to initially rebuke the Jewish people indirectly. If we read all of his hints we will see that they are actually allusions to the goodness and nobility of the people as much as they are hints to their transgressions. Once he demonstrated that he was rebuking them out of love, evidenced by the fact that he sought to portray them before G-d in a positive light, he could then proceed to reprimand them in stronger and more explicit terms.

The Chassidic Master, R. Zvi Elimelech in his work "Igra d'Kalah" shows the parallel nature of Moses' rebuke.

The Wilderness: Faithfulness

According to Rashi, Moses lists the "*midbar*-the wilderness" as a way of reminding them of how they complained to G-d for the lack of food as they entered the wilderness.

According to R. Zvi Elimelech, Moses was also addressing the word "*ba'midbar*-in the wilderness" to G-d with the opposite implication in mind, as if to say, "Look how faithful they were, that they left Egypt to travel in a barren desert without any food supplies other than the Matzah. See how much they trusted You."

In the Plains: Pinchas Heroism

Moses then listed "in the Plains," which according to Rashi alluded to the worshipping of the idol P'eor when they were in the "Plains of Moab."

The parallel hint, as it was directed by Moses to G-d, was to the way Pinchas risked his life to stop the plague that threatened the Jewish people in the aftermath of their pagan orgy in the Plains of Moab.

The Sea of Reeds: Nachshon's PLunge

Next, Moses mentioned the Sea of Reeds, referring to the way they rebelled against G-d and complained "Are there no graves in Egypt that you took us here to die in the wilderness," when they approached the sea and were pursued by the Egyptians.

And yet, this same experience at the Sea of Reeds was invoked by Moses as a reminder of the heroic act of Nachshon who plunged into the sea even before it split.

Paran: The Two Spies Who Resisted

Paran, was the place from which the evil spies were sent to scout the Land of Israel, who returned with a slanderous report about the Promised Land. But Paran is also the place

from which the two righteous spies, Joshua and Caleb, departed—who resisted the mob mentality and affirmed their loyalty to G-d and Moses.

Tofel and Lavan: Manna made Jews Spiritually Sophisticated

Tofel and Lavan, Rashi explains were not real places but allude to the way they complained (Tofel) about the white Manna (Lavan) and did not show appreciation to G-d for this heavenly food.

R. Tzvi Elemelech, however, demonstrates how the Manna was responsible for their ability to absorb the refined teachings of the Torah. Indeed, our Sages inform us that the Torah could not have been given to anyone else but to those who ate the Manna.

By mentioning the Manna, Moses sought to "remind" G-d of the sophisticated intellectual and spiritual nature of the Jewish people that thrived by eating the Manna and through whom the Torah was received and transmitted to us. Without that generation the world would not have had access to the Torah.

Chatzeiros: Korach's Children Repent

Chatzeiros, where Korachs' rebellion was fomented, was also the place where Korach's children repented and were spared the terrible fate of their rebellious father.

And it was from these children of Korach that an entire family of Levites emerged, including the prophet Shmuel. Moreover, these sons of Korach were the great composer of Psalms that we recite to this day.

Di Zahav: Gold for the Mishkan

And finally, "Di Zahav, the abundance of gold" although an allusion, as mentioned earlier, to the construction of the "Golden Calf," it was also intended as a hint to the spirit of generosity the Children of Israel displayed when the brought their prolific gold resources for the construction of the Mishkan, the portable Sanctuary. Indeed, the Torah testifies that they contributed even more than what was necessary.

While Moses was berating his people for their worshipping of the Golden Calf, he was also attempting to invoke G-d's love for His people, whose generosity knew no bounds.

In summation, form all the above it becomes clear that only a person who sees the good in those whom he needs to

rebuke and is willing to defend him or her before G-d is permitted to point out the flaws in others.

Lesson for Tisha B'Av

We stand now before Tisha B'av, the national day of mourning for the destruction of the two Holy Temples. Biblical and Talmudic literature is replete with descriptions of the iniquity of the people at that time, which caused the destruction. Certainly, this is a time to introspect and correct those behaviors and attitudes that are reminiscent of the behavior of the people then.

However, the lesson from this week's parsha is that at the same time that we look for the flaws of others to help change them, we must turn our gaze heavenward and do as Moses did, and say to our Creator and Liberator:

Our Plea to G-d

"G-d see the good in Your people.

Consider the fact that even when we sinned, we were also doing noble things.

In addition, we deserve to be compensated for all of the suffering we endured and rewarded handsomely for all the good we did in spite of that suffering.

So please G-d, bring an end to the painful exile we are in; bring us Moshiach whose coming will transform the saddest day of Tisha B'Av into the happiest holiday ever.

May we see this unfold this year and may we all celebrate Tisha B'Av in the newly constructed Third Temple in Jerusalem. Amen.

ESSAYTWENTY-THREE

DOUBLE RECOGNITION

FROM MENASHEH TO MISHNEH [TORAH] TO HASHEMEN TO NESHAMA

In exile, we forget where we should be; we are confused about life's experiences and we often don't know our place, our mission in life.

Galus is also characterized by a lack of awareness of G-d's role in our lives. We don't see the Divine in everything; we tend to forget G-d's many miracles.

Often after reciting our prayers and meditating about G-d, we can go on to engage in behavior that is unG-dly.

It is not a sign of insincerity; it is as sign that we have a Galus-Menasheh-forgetfulness mentality.

ESSAY TWENTY-THREE

DOUBLE RECOGNITION

FROM MENASHEH TO MISHNEH [TORAH] TO HASHEMEN TO NESHAMA

Machir took Gilad

Moses, in his final soliloquy to the Jewish people, recounts events of the past. Moses gently rebukes them for the things they did wrong in several of the places where they camped. Moses also recounts the miracles G-d did for them and the areas they had conquered before their crossing over the Jordan River.

Moses recounts the battle against the two kings, Sichon and Og, and how the conquered lands were given to the tribes of Reuven and Gad. However, part of the area known as Gilad was given to half of the tribe of Menasheh.

The Torah then states "I gave Gilad to Machir."

We know that every detail of Torah contains within it infinite wisdom and depth. Most importantly, however, are the lessons we must derive from each and every word, and certainly verse, of the Torah.

What then is the deeper meaning of the words "I gave Gilad to Machir?"

One can find many levels of meaning to this verse by analyzing the name Machir and the place called Gilad.

Knowing Your Place

Machir can be translated as "one who recognizes." An acquaintance is called a Machir in Hebrew because he or she recognizes the other.

We can go through life, meet many people and never recognize who these people really are and what life's events mean to us.

There is a Talmudic statement: "Who is a wise person? One who recognizes [Makir] his place." The simple meaning of this saying is that we should not delude ourselves about where we are in terms of our intellectual, emotional and spiritual development. We should know our qualities as well as our shortcomings.

A deeper understanding of this statement is that a wise person recognizes and appreciates his or her place in the world, and learns from, and contributes to, it.

Machir therefore symbolizes the person who is keenly aware of his or her surroundings, knows its challenges and

its benefits, and realizes that his or her G-d given mission is to both learn from and contribute to that location.

The psalmist (37:23) states, "G-d directs the footsteps of man." This means that if we find ourselves in a certain geographic location, we were put there by G-d; contrary to what we may think was our own choice.

Does that mean we don't have free choice? The answer is that while it was preordained by G-d that we would end up in a certain location we have the choice as to what we will do in that location. Will we recognize the place's needs and benefits? Will we avail ourselves of the opportunity to grow as a result of our connection to our new location? Will we see the challenges this area possesses and work to find the inspiration to meet those challenges? Will we resist absorbing the negative energies of the place and contribute positive energy to it?

Recognizing the Divine

Machir also includes the person who recognizes the Divine in everything. The Midrash states, "If you want to recognize (*Makir*) the One who spoke and the world came about, study Aggadah [the non-legal aspects of Talmud and Midrash, which focus on stories of the righteous and spiritual matters, among other inspirational topics]. For

this will enable you to recognize the Holy One, blessed is He and you will cling to His ways."

Machir thus symbolizes both knowing **our** place in this world and knowing the role **G-d** plays in our lives.

Why No Mention of Menasheh?

Let us consider why the Torah does not mention the name of Machir's father, Menasheh? In earlier verses it mentions that Yair was the son of Menashe. Why does the Torah omit Menasheh's name with respect to Machir?

One may start to answer this question by analyzing the name Menasheh itself. Joseph fathered his first child not too long after he had been imprisoned by Potiphar, sold into slavery by his brothers and suffered from their jealousy and hatred from an early age. Joseph had lived a life of much pain and anguish. So he named his first son Menasheh, because "G-d made me forget all my travail and all that was in my father's house."

In other words, Menashe relates to forgetting and pain. These two characteristics are, not coincidentally, hallmarks of Galus-exile.

In exile, we forget where we should be; we are confused about life's experiences and we often don't know our place, our mission in life.

Galus is also characterized by a lack of awareness of G-d's role in our lives. We don't see the Divine in everything; we tend to forget G-d's many miracles. Often after reciting our prayers and meditating about G-d, we can go on to engage in behavior that is unG-dly. It is not a sign of insincerity; it is as sign that we have a Galus-Menasheh-forgetfulness mentality.

Thus, Machir, although he is the son of Menasheh, breaks out of the Galus mode into a Geulah-Redemption mode, where recognition of both G-d's and our roles are clear.

Tied to Elijah the Giladite

This is why Machir was given the place called Gilad. Gilad is the symbol of Geulah-Redemption because that is the place with which Elijah the prophet is identified: "Eliyahu Hagiladi."

Thus the verse here says when we work on becoming a Machir, those who recognize both the Divine and our place in the world, are connected to the future Redemption to be heralded by Elijah.

Why is Elijah hinted here instead of Moshiach?

Stage One of Redemption: From Menasheh to Mishneh [Torah].

One may suggest that the Messianic Age will come in two stages. The first stage is to break out of the forgetfulness-Menasheh mode; this will happen through the intervention of Elijah. Concerning Elijah, it is stated that his role is to bring parents and children together. The area where our forgetfulness is most acute is remembering the teachings of our fathers. With the passing of each generation, the following generation forgets the teachings and traditions of the earlier generations.

It is interesting that the first Torah work designed to prevent forgetfulness, the so-called "Menasheh syndrome," was the Mishnah, which is an anagram of Menasheh. This suggests that when we study the Mishneh, which today refers not only to the actual Mishneh but all collections of Jewish law particularly the comprehensive work of Maimonides entitled **Mishneh** Torah, we hasten the final Redemption. Mishneh "rearranges" our priorities and mindset from Menasheh to Mishneh.

Indeed, our Sages tell us that it will be in the merit of the study of Mishnah that the exiles will be gathered together in the Messianic Age.

Why Mishnah in particular? Why not just any part of Torah?

The answer may lie in the fact that the Mishnah's function is to reverse the Menashe-forgetfulness exile syndrome that occurs with the passage of time and the succession of one generation to the next.

Stage Two of Redemption: From Menasheh to Neshama

However, there is another dimension to the Messianic Age connected to Machir. If Machir means, as stated, the ability to recognize the Master of the World, that recognition comes through the study of the inner dimension of the Torah, specifically the teachings of Chassidus as revealed in the last two centuries as a preparation for the Messianic Age when Moshiach will teach the deepest secrets of Torah.

Thus, the Midrash cited above states "If you want to recognize the one who spoke and the world came about, study Aggadah. For this will enable you to recognize the Holy One, blessed is He and you will cling to His ways." The study of Aggadah is related to the study of the inner dimension of the Torah because, as the Alter Rebbe asserts in his Tanya, "most of the secrets of the Torah are embedded in the Aggadah."

The study of Aggadah is the gateway to uncovering the spiritual and mystical levels of Torah, which introduce us to the dimension of Torah that Moshiach will fully reveal.

Interestingly, the word Menasheh, when rearranged spells both the word *hashemen*-the oil, a metaphor for the mystical teachings and the word *neshama*, which means soul. Machir, which through the study of the inner precincts of Torah [*Hashemen*], unlocks the hidden recesses of our souls [*Neshama*] and thereby totally reverses the name Menasheh.

The Second Meaning of Gilad

This ties in with yet another meaning of the word Gilad, which is a composite of two words, *gal* and *eid*. Gal means "to expose" and hints at the words of King David (Psalm 119:18) "Open my eyes [*Gal* einay] so I can see wonders in Your Torah." The word *eid*, in turn, means witness. When we study the hidden aspects of Torah, which touch the hidden layers of our soul, we testify to G-d's presence in our lives and in the world. Moreover, we are able to reveal as a witness even the hidden aspects of G-d.

In effect, the word Machir has two meanings: recognizing who we are and our place in the cosmos and recognizing the Divine in our world.

Galus is the antithesis of both senses of Machir. It obscures our understanding of our purpose in this world and it blocks G-d out of the picture.

Paralleling these two aspects of Machir are two meanings of Gilad as well. Elijah from Gilad is the one who removes the Menashe-forgetfulness aspect of Galus and brings the generations together.

To help facilitate and hasten this process, the study of Mishneh (Menasheh rearranged) and Mishneh Torah is most suited.

However, Moshiach, who performs the *Gal einai*-opening-of-our-eyes aspect of Gilad to allow us to see the wonders of Torah, benefits from our study of the inner dimension of Torah; that part of Torah entirely Geulah-oriented. This is the rearranged letters of Menasheh (into *Hashemen and*) the neshama of Torah that enables us to recognize [Machir] the role of the Divine in our lives.